

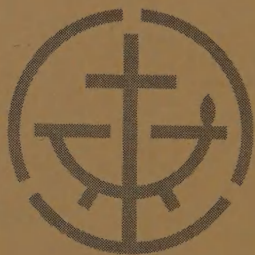
School of Theology at Claremont



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THE MINISTER AT WORK

ANDREW BENVIE, B.D.



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The Minister at Work

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REV. ANDREW BENVIE, B.D.

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FOREWORD

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THE substance of this volume was delivered in seven lectures addressed in 1910-11 to students in Divinity in the four universities of Scotland. While dealing primarily with Pastoral Theology and Training, many matters are discussed which, I believe, are of deep interest and importance to laymen, especially those who hold office in Presbyterian Churches.

In the hope that it will supply a felt want, this volume is now offered to the Christian public.

A. B.

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The Minister at Work

CHAPTER I

The Minister in the Twentieth Century

A MINISTER of a Scottish parish occupies a recognised and conspicuous public position. He is the official embodiment and expression of the national faith, and in him the parish and the country expect to see, illustrated at their highest level, the urbanity, the gentleness, the purity of motive, and the manful devotion of life that become, in an especial degree, the ambassador and minister of Christ. Time was when to occupy such a position was easier, and in another sense more difficult than it is to-day. Then the parish minister held the situation, and bore the responsibility alone. Now there is a duumvirate or a triumvirate or more in a divided field, with all the potential frictions, jealousies, and forms of competition that do accompany or flow from a complicated and, in many respects, deplorable ecclesiastical situation. Then the parish minister was *solus*—the

authority, his position recognised and secure, his relation to every parishioner, high, low, rich, and poor, understood and accepted. He was the guide, philosopher, friend, father of the parish. But such halcyon days are long past.

The parish minister has now his competitors, even, unhappily, his antagonists. They say that competition is the life of trade. I am not prepared to say from experience that it is the life of religion in a country parish. Too often, alas ! has it been the death of it. To such a *dénouement*, however, a parish minister must not be contributory. It may be hard to follow men who enjoyed the dignity of undisputed precedence, and to live amid the jostlings of clerical competition. But it has to be done, and well done. How, we shall consider later on.

Then the minister has to occupy a pulpit and preach usually twice at least every Sunday. At this stage I do not deal with the details and technique of preaching which fall naturally into another department, and about which, later on, I shall offer all the best things I know. Here I have to point out its difficulty as part—and not the least part—of a minister's work in these days. The atmosphere in which the preacher works is not so exhilarating or inspiring as it used to be when parishioners were more eager and receptive. True, there may be no manifestation of hostility, but there is undoubtedly, quiescent and non-obtrusive though it be, an element of secular indifference per-

vading the public mind, a spiritual inertia, a something between the speaker on divine things and the hearers both within and beyond his range, which tends in the long run to damp his enthusiasm, and take the heart out of his work.

Opposition could be far more easily met than this deadly indifference. Time was when the weekly sermon was an event in a parish eagerly anticipated, and remembered, discussed, and recalled with deep interest. Who could not but preach at his highest level with such an auditory and such an inspiration? Now people tell us that the text and the subject are forgotten ere the retiring worshippers reach the churchyard gate. There is a sort of sleeping sickness (not physical) among church members, and, whatever be its cause, the preacher in these days has before him what, but for the grace of God, would be not only a herculean but a hopeless task. The secular press is silent, indifferent, sometimes cynical; and the preacher meantime can look for little or no encouragement in that quarter. Has public opinion pronounced the Gospel stale? Is the pulpit to be dispatched to the lumber yard?

These are serious questions for Christianity, for the country, and for the Church. What answers may be offered I reserve till I come to deal specifically with preaching. Here I remark that it is evident we must adjust our methods and powers to meet

the new conditions. Ministers have no fear about the Gospel's permanent place and ultimate triumph, but they must do their duty by it. Useless is it to pretend that that duty is easy, but easy or not they must, in the Master's name, brace themselves to do it. (If the old styles of thinking and of expression have become obsolete and no longer effective, preachers must mend all that, go forward with the times, think up to date, adapt their methods to present-day necessities, and be living ministers to living men.)

In that readjustment not a few cherished opinions and prejudices must inevitably go. There need be little regret and no real loss, for the resources of religion are exhaustless, and what twentieth century souls demand, the twentieth century ministry must supply. Correctly to interpret these demands is the minister's first business, his second to supply them; and in striving with his whole soul to do the one and the other, he will early discover that extravagances of manner and sensational methods are absolutely futile. The House of God and the variety theatre has each its place and its own sphere of influence, and the modern minister will only court failure by attempting to confound them.

Nor must an aspirant to the ministry forget that, in this twentieth century, the intellectual atmosphere is not what it was even five-and-twenty years ago. The modern preacher has to minister in the things

of God to a more intellectual and critical constituency. Every department of human knowledge has made enormous strides. (Science is conquering all along the line. Its methods, no longer recondite, have been rapidly popularised. (Many of its discoveries now form part of the intellectual equipment of every schoolboy, and are discussed in workshops and working-men's clubs.) (Literature in all its branches—popular, scientific, economic, technical, critical, is diffused among all classes with a freedom hitherto unparalleled. The general level of education has risen enormously, and is still rising.

(Now, such a situation presents problems and creates conditions which the religious teacher of to-day cannot afford to ignore.) He must equip himself accordingly. The pulpit may not without absolute ruin to its influence sink to the intellectual level of the pew or below it. A preacher to educated men and cultured women must himself be better educated and more highly cultured than they. There never was in any previous period of the Church's history a demand so absolutely clamant as now for a highly trained and thoroughly educated ministry. There is no place and no work for a clerical novice; the pew will repudiate and confound him. The modern preacher must be "thoroughly furnished," able to render a reason and a good one for all he says and does, and must feel no necessity for making any apology whatever for his profession or his existence.

In his own special sphere of religious belief he will find what indeed is tantamount to a revolution slowly but surely going on. He must not be oblivious of the fact, or act as if he were. *It is there.* He is in the midst of it; and on him rests the enormous responsibility of guiding and directing to the best ends and issues, a movement which he cannot stop. (The hand of a steady and competent pilot must be on the tiller, for the channel is narrow, and there are rocks ahead.)

N.B. { With the true and essential doctrines of the Christian faith as accepted by the Church, their credibility, authority, and concatenation, I am not at present concerned. My object is to indicate movements and conditions affecting, it may be, the recognition of the truth, and certainly the relative valuation of Christian doctrines, which exist in the practical world of to-day. Ministers are often disappointed to find the academic and logical order of doctrines broken up. They forget that the pew is thinking for itself. The worshippers are engaged in the process of doctrinal reconstruction, discarding, it may be, bits of the traditional creed that their fathers never dreamed of doubting, making free with the bonds of system, selecting what they think is best in Christianity, and adopting a new order in the estimated value of truths that sets authority, tradition, and logic, each and all, at defiance. The last go first, the first last, and some doctrines once held most

precious get no place at all. Further afield—outside the church—where, not so long ago, all matters doctrinal seemed permanently fixed and formulated, the preacher now finds fluidity—men wondering how much of the dear old faith their mothers taught them, they can conscientiously retain, and others living in an agnostic atmosphere, almost ready yet reluctant to break the last link that binds them to the Christianity that the pulpit represents.

(Then the minister of to-day like his predecessor has to deal with the Bible and its divine message.) Futile and even fatuous would it be for him to ignore the fact that modern investigation — profound, scientific, reverent—has brought about what cannot be otherwise described than as a revolution in opinion regarding that most precious of Christian possessions. The methods of investigation and the nature, amount, and relative significance of the results obtained do not here fall within my province. It is mine, however, to deal with what the minister finds in the world to-day—a concrete reality about which there can be no dispute. I wish to deal with the nature of that reality, and to advise in the light of experience, how the minister is to deal with it, in the best interests of souls.

It is true that the old Bibles are still to be found in their old places on the pew desks, just as they were a hundred years ago and more. But it is well to remember that the Bibles in the pews do not mean

exactly what they once did. A change for better or for worse has come over the spirit of the dream. The new criticism in its rude chips and fragments, in its extravagant forms it may be, or in any case, in its spirit, has come probably to stay. It has invaded the pew, and has to be dealt with one way or another in the pulpit. (The old minister and the old congregation found the Bible a very easy book. It was all equally true, and perhaps equally important. From Genesis to Revelation it was the Word of God; verse by verse it was the utterance of God—and infallible. To quote a text was to prove a doctrine, and as the whole record of revelation was on one plane, a harmonised system of revealed truth was not very difficult to construct.)

But to the thinking worshipper in a modern church pew the Bible is a new book. To him the sacred contents are not all on one plane, and cannot without violence be indiscriminately manipulated. His view of the process of divine revelation is that of an evolution, a slow development under the ceaseless guidance of the Spirit of God, which is still progressing. Of this the Bible is the record, and in his view, so far from lying all on the dead level, it slopes up through the long centuries, from the elementary conception, the unreasoned tradition, the crude suggestion, and the low ideal to the heights of Christian revelation, all radiant with the growing light of God.

To deal with such a book, and in the presence of

such ideas, be they right or wrong, demands on the part of the preacher ample knowledge, much tender forbearance, skilful and dexterous management, and, need I add, a heart all aglow with the fervour and *N. B.*, surcharged with the charity of Christ. An unobservant pilot, strong in the self-sufficiency of ignorance, a good honest man all the same, full of the best intentions and sustained by the strongest convictions, may readily, for want of tact or under the full assurance that eighteenth century navigation is good for all time, unwittingly rush upon rocks and wreck the ship. That he was sober, in earnest about his work, and thoroughly conscientious will not redeem the disaster, or enable him to escape culpability for bad seamanship. He should have known better, and in the interests of passengers and crew his sailing certificate is suspended.

So amid the shoals, rocks, and quicksands of modern Bible interpretation, or such results of it as have reached the pew, the preacher has to steer warily, giving no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed, neither handling the Word of God deceitfully nor blindly. He must take good soundings, recognise and measure well the situation, and so adapt himself to it and to the minds and hearts of his hearers, even to their prejudices in things non-essential, that he may never hinder but always help to further their spiritual interests.

How these conditions may best be fulfilled will

be the subject of earnest inquiry when I come to deal at close quarters with present-day preaching. Meanwhile, as an old pilot through the troublous seas of the modern ministry, I have tried in a broad and general way to show the land and the conditions. I have not used rose colour, nor have I dealt more largely than the truth demanded in neutral tints, but holding the mirror up to nature as best I could in honest portraiture.

Some may say after the survey, "There are no exceptional difficulties. Doctors, lawyers, Civil Service men have, in some respects, a steeper hill to climb than that of the ministry, and are engaged in work at least as exacting, difficult, and dangerous, and yet they make no outcry but manfully tackle it with all their power, and accomplish it. Why should ministers draw back in sentimental timidity? (What a doctor, a lawyer, an engineer can do, the preacher can, as far as brains and hard work go, and in our own sphere we are ready.)"

I dare not enter on any comparison of the trials, labours, strenuous work, patient waiting, and self-denial generally, that differentiate any one of the professions I have named from that of the ministry. To every man in his own place, whatever it be, who works and suffers at his highest for humanity is due our humble and unstinted meed of praise. Those who are thinking of entering the ministry may at once disabuse themselves of the idea that the clergy

have any special monopoly of self-sacrifice, or that the choice of the ministerial profession implies the surrender of more advantages and emoluments than other men are giving up every day for the pure love of the employment or profession they have chosen.

What, then, of the divine call to the office of the ministry? Is it essentially different from what determines other men in the choice of a profession? I think it is in many, if not absolutely in all, respects the same. (The clergy have too long arrogated to themselves a something peculiar, exclusive, it may be miraculous, in the way of their calling that they do not concede to the laborious teacher or the devoted medical practitioner. "These have chosen their own profession, but God gives a special call to the minister." So it has been said. Let us see.

The faculties that fit a man for journalism or medical practice are there by no accident, but by the express determination and gift of God. Along the lines of natural selection, which are the methods of God, these men have been led to make a preference. For a special sphere of service they have discovered, as they think, a ¹special aptitude. A ²natural liking for an occupation accompanies or follows up the aptitude. ³We like to do what we think we can do best. ⁴The faculties are drawn out in that direction, educated, pleasurably exerted, and you have the teacher, or the physician, the engineer, or the surgeon. Sometimes the choice is a wrong one, and

happy is he who has the wit to correct it in time. A failure is avoided ; a success elsewhere, it may be, achieved. Nothing supernatural in all that ; but it is God's guiding all the same. The laws of nature are the methods of a divine providence, and there you have the differentiation made—the calling of God.

What is there about the ministry that stands outside of all this pre-established harmony elsewhere and makes it, and it alone, a miraculous field of operation ? Let any minister look back and think how he came to make the choice of his profession. He may have drifted into the divinity hall by a kind of moral gravitation. He may have made a mistake—a stupendous miscalculation. He certainly has, if nothing else has happened or is in process of happening. It may be his own mistake—lack of self-judgment—his father's, his mother's, his teacher's mistake, but he feels somehow he is in it, and, alas ! the difficulty of rectifying it by turning back. Yet the student may be mistaken in thinking he has made a mistake. That very thought, the result probably of modest self-estimation in the dawning light of a responsibility so much greater than he had anticipated, is a healthy token. To such I say, "Take heart of grace. That heart-sinking may be, and probably is, but a symptom of the greater man of the heart rising to live."

In the Church they call this something that has happened by an ecclesiastical name. Call it what

you will. From this time forward the man has surrendered his soul to find it again all purified and ennobled in his work. *good.* The intellect, the soul, the whole being of a man fail to touch their highest possibilities till fired through and through with the fire that burns out *self*—the purifying flame of enthusiasm that loses and finds its all again in the glory of the work. What minister is there who has not experienced at one time or another the most serious and agonising misgivings as to the reality and validity of his call to serve in the Church? Who has not passed through long persistent and unsettling doubts as to whether or not he holds the Lord's commission or should be where he is? Better this, a thousand times better, than the dull mechanical self-assurance that never knew unsettlement and takes office and all its responsibilities as a matter of course. Many a good earnest soul has lingered long in the dark corridors and clammy vaults of mental tribulation over the question, "Am I one of God's elect or no?" There is but one answer. If he has chosen God, God has chosen him. Beyond that I have nothing to say.

So with the call to the ministry. If, for Christ's sake and the Christly love of souls, a minister has offered himself, there is no question about his call. If otherwise, there is a question. Every man must settle that with his own conscience. No adviser can intervene. Now what does one reasonably

expect in the way of a call? (A glorified vision of Christ triumphant, and a commission direct from His lips as Paul had; or a man of Macedonia in vision stretching out his hands for help; or a pentecostal inspiration; or a still small voice that speaks louder than the thunders? These spiritual verities have been experienced on the best of all evidence, and such verities of vocation are confined to no age. Divested of their external or, it may be, Eastern garb, they exist to-day and for ever.

N.B. God is not limited in His ways of communicating with the souls of men. 'Tis the twentieth century, but the heavens are not brass.

An Australian cousin of mine paid me a visit in Edinburgh a year or two ago. He is a missionary in Central China, and the story he told of his life and work there was intensely interesting. I knew he had been brought up in the mercantile world, and naturally inquired what had put it into his head to become a missionary. ("Well," he said, "I had a young man's dream of missionary enterprise but felt I was very unfit, and doubted long as to whether I had the faculties, and especially the call. Reading one day in the New Testament about the disciples chartering an ass for the Master's service and being commissioned to say to objectors, 'The Lord hath need of him,' I bethought me that if an ass could serve I too might. So I put myself in the way, attended the Mission College at Melbourne, and,

thank God," he added, "I have been enabled, ass or no,
to carry Christ now for ten years into the far heart
of China. I never doubted of the call the moment
I was in the work, and am content and happy to be
but a beast of burden as long as I carry the
Master." If the heart is called, the intellect will
follow, and all the faculties such as they are.

CHAPTER II

Personal Qualifications

IN the last chapter I presented a general view of the ministerial office and its requirements. From a wide survey of the duties to be discharged, and the special difficulties that a modern minister has to be prepared to cope with, I made clear the urgent need of a full and efficient equipment. The duties of this sacred profession are so varied, often so delicate, always exacting, and not seldom demanding such strenuous and sustained exertion, that the successful discharge of them necessitates the best use of the best trained faculties that the best of men possess. God worketh for us no doubt, and with us most certainly; but He never supplies by miracle deficiencies that it was our own duty to make good. A true minister, like a true artist, gives his whole manhood to his work, keeping nothing back. Christ has no employment or commission for half a man, or any offered fraction. Body, soul, strength, mind—all he is and has, with never a thought of discount, must go. A minister is to live in his work, wrestle with it by

day, dream of it at night, utilise for it all his resources, identify his whole being with it—make it his immediate jewel—else for all the use he can be he had a thousand times better find some other occupation. (Unless the whole man respond to the call, nothing responds.) There is no place for lay figures in the ministry, and if a man has any axe of his own to grind, personal end to seek, or vanity to gratify, he is not wanted. Let him stay where he is and be an honest man.

A minister cannot afford to neglect details, no matter how seemingly insignificant, without paying a penalty many times larger than the neglect appeared to merit. Does a surgeon neglect any detail? Life hangs on a thread, and how delicately he deals with the thread. Ministers have work as delicate as that—eternal interests hanging on threads. Let them carry to their spiritual surgery the same delicacy of touch, and thoroughness of knowledge utilised and illustrated in the operating theatre, and there will be fewer clerical failures. The largest issues—a successful voyage across the Atlantic, a great battle that decides the fate of empires, a great political speech, a great sermon, are each and all dependent on a multiplicity of details not one of which is negligible. (The minister cannot afford to despise or neglect anything however trivial on which success depends;) and yet how many of our really ablest men have come short, or failed entirely for lack of the faculty of

taking trouble in the mastery of details. How many have thrown their opportunities, their learning, and themselves away by not correcting here and there the little faults of manner, method, address, pronunciation even, that marred their work and hindered its efficiency.

N.A.
A minister may be inclined to think it of very little consequence, for example, whether or not he acquire the manners, deportment, and style of a gentleman, and many may be surprised at my saying in all seriousness that, next to the primal requisite of a heart aglow with Christian love, a minister must be a gentleman in manners, feelings, courtesy, and address. Now these absolutely necessary qualifications do not come to a man as a matter of course, nor do they necessarily attend even great learning. They have to be acquired like other good things, by patient self-restraint and diligent practice. Their value to a minister is simply inestimable, and the lack of them or any of them will mar and, it may be, shatter what would otherwise have been a great career.

Mere book-learning even added to true religion does not by any means necessarily imply or confer these gentlemanly qualifications, far less does it compensate or atone for the lack of them. A man may be a profound philosopher, with a European reputation, and have the manners of a boor. To such manners hard study, seclusion, lack of refining

society do assuredly contribute; and for the purposes of a profession which is wholly exercised among men, women, and children, and among all classes from the lowest to the highest, boorish manners and ways are simply fatal. The recognised guide of souls as well as exemplar of Jesus Christ must, if he is to accomplish his mission, not only be, but look, speak, and act the Christian gentleman. His work requires, and the people demand it. An instance on the other side illustrates this as by a striking example.

The parish minister, a quiet, refined, somewhat reserved, but kindly gentleman, had died. It was the year 1875, and patronage had just been abolished. The parish was entirely rural, and the novel privilege fell to the ploughman majority of electing a minister after their own mind. The prevailing sentiment, unfortunately, was expressed thus: "We'll hae nae mair gentlemen, an' just bring in a mon like oorsells." They did; and it was a deplorable choice—a lost parish. The man like themselves in their sense of the phrase was of no possible service to them—morally or spiritually. He only cumbered the ground which a gentleman might have made into a garden of the Lord.

The clergyman must be qualified to meet and minister to all classes, and be acceptable in every home from the palace, if there be one, to the farm

bothy. He is first of all to look like a minister. Even the humblest people have a very shrewd appreciation of what he should look like, and of what he should not look like. They want a man they can reverence, one who "bears his high commission in his look," and whose very personality is an education to them. His clothes—oh, some may say what matters the wrapping, if the soul be there? *Sartor Resartus* notwithstanding, there is a true philosophy of clothes which even a spiritual guide may not despise. Have there not been preachers barefooted and in rags, great orators and enthusiasts, whose whole wardrobe consisted in a minimum beyond the unwashed incrustation of wilderness dirt? All right for the sixth, seventh, eleventh century. The style suited the times and added probably not a little power to the message. We live in the twentieth century, and if we be as wise as those saints were in their day, we too will dress up-to-date. Just think of it. The parish minister comes along—green-brown greatcoat, battered, greasy, slouch hat, voluminous cravat to hide the dearth of linen, a veritable clerical gaberlunzie. What is his spiritual value? What is his influence worth outside the narrow circle of those who intimately know the man in mufti? He has mortgaged his prestige by stupidly disappointing reasonable expectation. It may be all very well to quote, " 'Tis the mind that makes the body rich " ; but that is too great a luxury for a minister to indulge

in if he knows the folly and the danger of giving up his influence for a whim.

But I must not forget the opposite extreme—the clerical tailor's walking advertisement. I commend you to Cowper if you wish a sharp instrument wherewith to demolish "the tailor-made minister." Between the two extravagances lies the true economy that you want—in dress and in appearance generally the minister is neither to be a ghoul in old garments nor a dandy in new. The one feels he is superior to clothes, the other that he is their creature and dependent. A sensible minister will feel his position assured and his influence enhanced by the wearing of dress appropriate to his high calling. With the more highlycultured section of his people he should be *persona grata*; and he will readily recognise that a rough, boorish manner and address will assuredly minimise, if it does not completely destroy, his influence with them. (The drawing-rooms and dining-rooms where he fails to comport himself as a cultured and refined member of society will soon become inaccessible for him, and so caste and influence gone, his spiritual vocation will speedily cease to be recognised.)

To the humblest people in his parish the minister must always be accessible, courteous, and kindly, but this does not mean that he is to descend to their level and style, be hail-fellow-well-met with Tom, Dick, and Harry, address them in the vernacular, or

N.B. smoke pipes in farm bothies. A style of this kind is thoroughly disliked and not seldom resented by the very class that an inexperienced and injudicious minister thinks he is conciliating by parting with his own dignity. (He can be as genial and urbane as possible and conserve the ministerial relation all the while.) When he parts with that even on some special occasion he loses more—far more—than he gains, and if he forgets in what he may call “off duty” moments that he is the minister, his congregation will not be long in learning to forget it also. The minister in his parish has no “off-duty” moments. In a gay party of children, joining in picnic sports and radiating gladness all around, he is still the minister, and the children and their parents like to have it so.

[Two kinds of ministers may here be noted by way of warning, for both extremes are wrong. There is the Merry Andrew—flippant, jocular, light-hearted, easy-going, on occasions vulgar, never apparently in earnest, secular in his tone, and habitually out of touch with his profession and its weighty responsibilities.] [Then there is the Eugene Aram type—pale, bilious, with a sad, despondent, crestfallen look as if he carried all the sins and sorrows of the parish on his back. If he ever deign to smile, it is a saddening smile, like the glint of a sunbeam struggling through a thundercloud. With ordered steps and slow, he moves about, bearing with him a melancholy

demeanour as if he were for ever engaged attending his father's funeral. The dairyman hastens by—in case his milk should be curdled. At a wedding party he is a wet blanket: and a little school-girl would sooner take a policeman's hand than his. Christianity in perpetual mourning seems to have found its apotheosis in him.]

From the levity of the former type and the dolour of the latter pray to be delivered. But perhaps I have said enough to show that a minister must in manner, as well as in heart and soul, be a gentleman. A gentleman, urbane, tactful, sympathetic, wearing in all manfulness and humility the dignity of his office, and always wearing it.

Who but a gentleman is fitted to discharge the delicate duties that so often fall to a minister—to rebuke the erring, and with fatherly counsel win the sinner back, to comfort the widow and the fatherless in the day of darkness and sorrow, to cheer the dying through the valley of the shadow, ministering peace and hope in the Master's name and spirit? Who but a gentleman, with a pure mind and a large loving heart, is sufficient for duties like these? They demand the best man—and demand him at his best.

Chaucer's picture is an old one, but in a sense ever new—

“He was a shepherd and no mercenary,
And tho' he holy was and virtuous
He was to sinful men full piteous.

His words were strong but not with anger fraught,
 A love benignant he discreetly taught
 To draw mankind to Heaven by gentleness,
 And good example was his business.
 But if that any one were obstinate,
 Whether he were of high or low estate,
 Him would he sharply check with altered mien.
 A better parson there was nowhere seen.
 He paid no court to pomps and reverence,
 Nor spiced his conscience at his soul's expense,
 But Jesus' love which owns no pride or pelf
 He taught—but first he followed it himself."

N.B. Coming in contact then with all sorts and conditions of men and women—the young, the old, the rich, the poor, the educated, and the illiterate, and that for one high and express purpose—to influence them all for good—it is perfectly evident that the minister must be an expert in human nature. There is his field of operation. There his victories must all be won, and it goes without saying that he must be thoroughly well acquainted with that world unseen where his vocation lies. We have heard that vocation described as a "cure of souls." The expression does not commend itself. It is not scriptural, and it savours of priestcraft and quackery, two things to be resolutely banned.

"A cure of souls" suggests the ecclesiastical apothecary making his rounds and dispensing his drugs after a very precarious diagnosis. The minister is not a soul-doctor. There is a physician of souls, but He is higher than the minister, who is

charged with the care of souls, not their cure. Ministers are called to be shepherds, to feed the sheep and the lambs—a beautiful figure in Eastern garb. The Good Shepherd knows His sheep by head-mark, their nature and disposition, because they are His and He loves them. So must the shepherd of souls know human nature, else men will flee from him rather than follow. And if the proper study of mankind be man, it is absolutely essential that students for the ministry should read deeply here and learn well this altogether indispensable kind of lore. Without it he will run his bark on shallows and on rocks.

Now this kind of learning, the basal element of all other learning, is not to be acquired from books or from theorists of the lamp and cloister. It is a life school the minister must attend, not a psychological institute. (Theory counts for little—experience for much.) I once came across a profound student of mental and metaphysical science to whom the secret of Hegel was plain sailing, but he turned out a profound ass in all practical affairs. Inducted to an important charge where high hopes were entertained regarding him, for his ability was outstanding, he began quite early to knock his philosophic head against every accessible stone wall. He trampled ruthlessly on tender toes, laid down his dictum as if it were a divine authority, blindly offended his leading people, quarrelled with the choir, harassed

the elders, worried the beadle, and ended by becoming a complete failure. Nothing wrong with him morally—capital preacher, devoted to what he thought was his duty, made mischief without knowing, far less intending it. And when you seek for the secret—not of Hegel but of his collapse—you will find it here—he didn't know anything about human nature. He was profoundly ignorant of everything outside a book, lacked common sense, and appeared to know no more about how to manage men, women, and affairs, than a cow knows about conic sections.

It used to be the fashion in former days for a law student who had finished his course of study to be called at once to the Bar. That is not done nowadays; your LL.B. goes to a ship-broker's office, a busy merchant's business in the city, an insurance office, or a solicitor's stool and serves an apprenticeship there. He is learning not only legal forms but the facts of human nature at first hand—things that Blackstone could not teach him, or a whole college of professors in the practice and theory of jurisprudence. Had the unhappy ministerial wreck, to whom I have referred, been required to go through a little of the hard discipline of practical life, where the angles would have been rubbed off, he would not have made shipwreck of his career.

But was there hope in a case like that, if it had been taken in time? The Greek philosophers

debated long as to whether virtue could be taught. Has it been established or not that common sense can? The opinion at least has found some acceptance that a man without common sense is past praying for. I am not quite so sure of that. What is common sense—that *sine qua non* for a minister and, indeed, for most men? Is it not simply the name given to moral and practical mensuration with a little perspective thrown in? What is called the lack of common sense is simply the false valuation a man makes of himself in the first place, and in the next, the false estimate he makes of the relative importance of the matters with which he has to deal in their bearings on himself and on other people.

(When a young minister starts with a ridiculously wrong conception of his own powers, position, and importance, he sees men and things through a distorted medium.) He makes wrong measurements and judgments walking, as he does, in a world which is purely of his own creation. A little friction in his view becomes torture. The mild and well-meant expression of an opinion adverse to his own cruel persecution. Such judgments and the feelings following are all of his own production, though he knows it not. Now if this overweening conceit, that wrecks in a short time both the man and his work, is a mental disease, I am afraid I dare not intrude on the domain of experts by offering any prescription.

The unhappy patient is what the man in the street would call, not very reverently, past praying for.

There are, I believe, very few cases of this extreme type, and the milder forms are surely not beyond the range of curative treatment. (If the patient is simply suffering from swelled head and has been identifying his opinions and ideas with incontestible truths, believing that he cannot possibly be wrong, a short period of contact with abler and more experienced men than himself, in whose company a good sound drubbing, intellectual and moral of course, can be readily obtained, is well calculated to reduce him to his true proportions and do a world of good.)

Then this better, saner estimate of himself will at once enable him to estimate men and things outside of himself at their true value. The minister has had a little rebuff, not ill-meant at all, but keenly felt. Things have not gone quite as he would have wished, and he dwells upon the fancied injury or injustice, turns it over and over, dreams about it till it becomes quite intolerable. Of all abused and unhappy men, he says to himself, I am surely the chief. Patience, young friend, don't rush at things in such a mood. You'll only hurt yourself and make matters worse. Turn your mind to something else ; visit a genial neighbour, take a little holiday, a little quiet exercise in prayer, ■ bit of good music

if you like it, a round of golf, and you'll not regret trying the prescription.

I have known some young ministers who immediately on their induction began forthwith to act as if they considered it their first and imperative duty to turn everything upside down. They begin as root-and-branch reformers. There's nothing up-to-date, nothing in the church or its arrangements but is badly needing overhauling and a new lease of life on lines entirely different from, and unquestionably better than, the old. Rough-shod he rides over all the prejudices, practices, and traditions of the congregation. The pulpit is in the wrong position, so is the baptismal font and the Communion table. From the heating apparatus and the church lamps to the vane on the steeple, all must be renewed. Then the forms of service are antiquated and must be brought up-to-date, or Reformation ideals must be revived, as the particular whim directs. The result is that everybody in the church is unsettled, many are disappointed, not a few are disgusted, and of those who have not lifted "their lines," there is a large proportion irritated and resentful. Such a minister's occupation is wellnigh gone. He has created an atmosphere of dispeace in which it is hard for him henceforth to do any good, and all for things non-essential, and changes that he could have easily accomplished in perfect harmony with his people had he gone about matters in the right spirit—

with tact and consideration. If he had only known that a congregation may easily be led but cannot, in Scotland at least, be driven, he would have gained by reasonably rapid stages all that was wished, and had all his people round him pleased and profited. Want of common sense and ignorance of human nature made all the difference. And once such a mistake is made, how hard it is to get back to right relations, while the havoc that a minister's reckless zeal may bring about in the first six months of his ministry will probably take years of patience and conciliation to repair. (Experience keeps a dear school but fools can be taught in no other, if they are ever to learn)

It is the knowledge of oneself that is the key to all other knowledge—human and divine. All is medial and relative. Through our impressions of self we interpret others, and a man's greatest theological conceptions are but the reflex of his own individual soul. All that we know of the divine nature, the Fatherhood, the Sonship, the justice and the love of God is mediately known, reached by our human experience, and so interpreted. Man projects himself on the screen of infinity, and the reflected light and glory all measureless is what he knows of God. So know we our fellowmen—their feelings, passions, hopes, fears. By knowing what moves ourselves, we discover the secret springs by which others are moved.

And so to him, who has the care of souls committed to him, I would commend the deep and earnest study of human nature—his own and his neighbours. (Ere one can benefit another spiritually and shepherd his soul, he must know that soul—its temptations, passions, possibilities, where its strength lies, and its weakness. Otherwise he beats the air, follows a mere will-of-the-wisp, discharges his gospel artillery aimlessly. That is a blind and futile ministry that knows not human nature and all its avenues. “We’ve a strange minister,” said a bewildered parishioner to a friend one day. “He’s a’ the week invisible and on Sabbath incomprehensible.” Just so—cause and effect were never more surely connected. Ignorance of the human nature of his flock, their dispositions, sorrows, joys, temptations, ways of thinking, and all the thousand and one things that make up their lives, makes the minister about as useful as the doctor who is content to pour drugs, of which he knows little, into bodies of which he knows less, with the splendid haphazard result which boys used to call “blind smash.” No wonder that the invisible minister grows more and more incomprehensible as the years pass. He may certainly grow to be an expert in Analytical Theology, Christology, or any other ology that takes his fancy; but he ceases to be of any use to the living men, women, and children who require his shepherdly care. “They made me a keeper of vineyards,” says the

prophet sadly, "but mine own vineyard have I not kept."

N.B.

Religion deals so directly and explicitly with the emotional side of human nature, that the man who does not know the way to the wells of feeling, and the fountain of tears, will usually return with an empty pitcher. His arguments may be sound and incontrovertible, his sledge-hammer heavy. Who cares? He is pounding at the wrong side of human nature. He fails to drive the nail, for he does not hit it on the head. He may bamboozle and distract the brain, but if he always misses the heart he is but "a sounding brass." Men and women do not come to church as to a school of Dialectic. They come to be influenced, moved, uplifted into a world of moral and spiritual enthusiasm where logic and learning have little influence and no abiding-place. (It is in the homes of his people, by their firesides and bedsides, that the true minister finds his vocation, makes his deepest mark, and secures his strongest foothold. There he discovers the best and readiest avenues of human nature that lie straight and open to his influence. Unrecognised, or regarded with indifference, they instinctively close, and the greatest opportunities of a minister's life are lost. The mother who discovers that the minister has no interest in her children, is not likely to have much interest in him or in anything that he has to offer her in the way of religion.) He takes the place of

an outsider, and she becomes indifferent. The minister who knows his business, on the other hand, utilises the divinely offered opportunity, following in spirit the great Shepherd who said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not : for of such is the kingdom of Heaven." In blessing the little ones He opened with love's golden key the gate of the Kingdom for the mothers to enter. Two ministers have I known, and only two for the gift is rare, who could address all the children of a large Sunday School by their Christian names. Neither of these was a philosopher or a theologian, but the wondrous influence they wielded neither philosophy nor theology could have supplied. They had the way straight to the heart of the family, and all else was easy. The father, too, had his fine boy Tom in India, and his gallant Jack at sea. The minister had the key of the citadel, and he never broke the spell by mixing up Tom and Jack. He knew human nature and its ways too well for that.

"And how is your good wife, Mr. M'Glashan? I think I've missed her out of church," says a popular public platform minister to an old member. "I daresay that, Doctor, since you buried her six months ago." "Oh, I'm so sorry," was the reply. "She was a dear good woman; you'll miss her sadly. Just forgot for the moment. The Lord comfort you, John." Six months pass, and again in the street minister

and member meet. "And how is your good wife, John!" "Ay, ay, still dead, Doctor, and I'll thank you to send me my disjunction lines, and my daughter's, and my son's, an' his wife's."

The silver cord was broken. No more ministry there. Now while it cannot be expected by any reasonable being that the minister of a large congregation can carry about with him the details of each member's family history, the individuals affected are often tempted to forget that the minister's memory has limits. A lapse of memory regarding sad events, which they expect him to remember, produces soreness, and, it may be, a bitter sense of being neglected. They too readily assume that the sympathy with which he comforted them at the time was only professional. They begin to distrust his sincerity, and cease, of course, to profit by his ministry. It is only human nature. Put yourself in their place and you will feel just as they do. Let no minister blame them : rather let him be advised to take home at least part of the blame and amend his methods by closer watchfulness, deeper interest, and a better kept and oftener consulted note-book.

There is no department of ministerial work which will not be affected for good by the study of human nature. It guides ministers in all their relations to their people, and finds its way into their sessional and pulpit work in the invaluable form of applied and sanctified common sense. It instructs them, for instance

N.B.
—one among many—to have no share out of the pulpit or in it in controversial politics, local or general. My advice is, keep clear of the heat and the dust of that unhallowed arena, where many a good and conscientious, but sadly impulsive, minister has wrecked his influence and shattered his best work. Among Scottish people, a man's politics, even his party politics, has become to him almost a religion. A Scotsman's political convictions are deep-rooted, and his political passions are correspondingly strong and fervid. Now a minister is certainly entitled to hold his own political opinions as strongly, and to feel about them as keenly, as any other man. But he is not entitled to endanger his spiritual influence and sacred position by open and unwise advocacy of political matters among those to whom he has to minister in holy things. He has to be spiritual guide to Conservative, Liberal, and Socialist: and if he is to minister effectively, he must refuse to be identified with partisan politics. Like the King he must be above party. The Tory or the Socialist with whom he ventures to dispute—descending from his own place to do so—or on whose devoted head he is tempted to pour down from the pulpit of Christ's peace the vials of his political condemnation, knowing that he cannot there and then be contradicted, feels that an unfair advantage is being taken and goes away with an angry spirit.

Such procedure on a minister's part is fatuous, and

cannot be too strongly denounced or too determinedly avoided. Beyond the common general principles of righteousness embedded in the Gospel, the minister may not pass with impunity. No Scotsman will submit to take more by dictation from pulpit, platform, or committee-room, and there can be no greater mistake made by a young minister, or an old, than to barter away his Christian ambassadorship for any mess of political pottage however savoury. Nothing could be more detrimental to the great cause of religion than the well-meant but foolish intrusion of the politician into the pulpit. The Churches both of England and Scotland have been discovering to their cost that hot party propaganda and the preaching of Christ's Gospel are mutually repellent.

The same holds true of other extreme opinions. The minister may personally be as strong and convinced a total abstainer as was John the Baptist, but he is not entitled to identify teetotalism with Christianity or denounce that respectable hotel-keeper in the fifth pew as ■ minister of Satan. Such intemperance of thought and expression is culpable in a minister, savouring at once of the lack of common sense and of that charity which thinketh no evil and speaks not unadvisedly with the lips. The personal example and tender forbearance of the preacher will, he may be assured, go far further towards the attainment of his object than strong denunciation

and passionate, but unwise and injudicious, speech. The study of human nature will further instruct the minister to keep his own counsel. When a doctor visiting a patient entertains him with an account of the last patient whose bedside he has just left, he commits a misdemeanour—a breach of confidence—and we place him among the lowest in the category—not to be trusted. When a spiritual adviser does the like we put him promptly and properly in the same place. What a minister says has such importance that it is apt to be quoted and misquoted. Besides, it is surely inadvisable for the minister to inform parishioner No. 1 of the estimate he has made of parishioner No. 2. The temptation to be a gad-about and a gossip, if it be a temptation, must be resisted. Quiet, saintly dignity will soon repel a gossip. He will soon discover that for the minister's ear at least his wares are not wanted.

The same invaluable study will be of enormous advantage in strengthening the influence of the pulpit. Human nature craves what is interesting and passes by what is not. The successful preacher understands this and acts accordingly. Man is an organism of ten thousand strings. The preacher is the artist: and all the possible harmonies and discords lie under his hand. Now he deals with Bible characters, facts, and doctrines. There in the book they lie dead. It is his to give them life and action, meaning and interest. Where they stand they are but names. Are they

patriarchs—Abraham, Jacob, Esau? Are they kings of Israel or Babylon? As such they waken just as much present-day interest as the mummies of the Pharaohs. They have to be clothed with humanity, their feelings and motives realised, brought down to date. Then the people will hear about them with attention, and the minister may apply, for the warning or example of the living souls before him, the moral and spiritual lessons of their lives. So with the facts of Bible history, the ritual of the old, the doctrines of the new religion. Treat them simply where they are and they are insignificant and unprofitable. A sermon on such lines may be orthodox, but it will certainly be deadly dull. The Bible facts have to be clothed with human nature, modernised, and directly applied to the living present.

The congregation that would sleep soundly or gaze vacantly at the tops of the church windows, while you discoursed eloquently on Melchizedek, Nebuchadnezzar or Hezekiah as persons whose names are in Scripture and once lived somewhere, will sit up and eagerly follow when these persons incarnated in the very human nature that they have, are set before their eyes as warnings or examples. So with doctrines. You are up in the clouds beating the air grandly, it may be, but to no purpose so long as you are dealing with things impalpable—abstract principles and theories. Bring them down, put flesh

and blood upon them, breathe a soul into them out N. B.
of your own, and the people will look, listen, and
be moved.

“How does it happen,” said a highly doctrinal preacher to Macready, the actor, whose acquaintance he had casually made, “that you can excite interest and evoke laughter and tears over things that never happened, and men that never lived, when I fail to get the same people on Sunday to show any interest in things that did happen, men that did live, and things that are true?” “Why,” said the actor, “that’s easily explained. I represent and express the false as if it were true, and you, I hear, work the other way about.” The difference is profound, and the lesson, for a preacher, most precious. Macready knew human nature and played skilfully upon it. Dr. Theophilus Paul, of London, did neither. He might as well have been reading an old almanac or a treatise on metaphysics, as applied to the signs of the zodiac, for all his dissolving congregation either knew or cared.

I have dwelt thus long on the absolute necessity of studying human nature and knowing it well, because I hold it to be the study of studies without which all other preparation for the ministry will be thrown away. A man may be a scholar in science, language, philosophy, theology, out-distancing all competitors if you will, and yet be a sheer novice in the great work of helping to save souls. This study

has two spheres—the one interpreting the other. There is the inner sphere—the study of oneself, and the outer sphere—the study of other people. In the former the minister has to see that his own humanity is healthily and fully developed. All his possibilities are to be explored and harmoniously evolved. The strong parts are to be balanced—it may be restrained. The weak are to be nourished, fostered carefully, and steadily educated. No teacher can do that, no proxy can deal with a man's secret self. By God's grace, and his own effort working therewith, he must himself dress and arrange his faculties for the special line of activity he has chosen. A fully-developed man is wanted for the ministry — no weakling need apply.

Brains, and heart, and health in both—the whole man and nothing but the whole is wanted. Is there any part below par? Is the memory sluggish or unreliable? Give it systematic exercise, test, and practice. Is the elaborative faculty slow? Do the wheels drag? Is composition laborious, and continuity of thought a struggle? Does the will-o'-the-wisp beguile you into side issues and away from the main track? Keep the waggon going, wheels well balanced, axles well greased with good health, and the motive power well supplied. Does imagination flag so that when you would fly you drop upon the hard road of prose or flounder in the Serbonian bog

of mixed metaphor and contorted illustration? The aeroplane may be hard to manage and will suffer now and then catastrophe, but keep practising. Become familiar with figures of speech, take note of the best phrases. From the dark room of cogitation carry your subject out into the open, where the trees grow, and the streams flow, and the heaven of God is above you. This prescription has proved effectual in many apparently hopeless cases. A young soul is very plastic; work it while it is so. Two little points more—humour and temper. These both exist in human nature properly developed, and in their place and measure are indispensable in a fully-equipped minister. A man, and notably a minister, is lacking in an element of power and usefulness, if he has no genial appreciation of incongruity, for that may pass as a definition of humour. It lightens the individual soul, and casts an indefinable glow upon the world it inhabits. But it is to be used with discretion in ministerial work. While a useful gift, it may be a fatal one if misused. There have been pulpit humorists, but they are few who have been successful. Spurgeon, Beecher, Hall, Bunyan, Moody, and M'Neill may be reckoned among them; but the failures are numberless. Grim, sardonic humour, with a bite and a bitterness in it, must surely be eschewed by the messenger of peace and goodwill, while frivolous humour means shipwreck of the messenger and the message in a surging sea of con-

tempt. Still, even in the pulpit, though it be rarely used, there is a place for honest, earnest, manful humour, one shot of which goes further than any kind of oratory that I know. In social gatherings of the congregation, particularly those for the young, there is good scope for the exercise of this gift; and as it is extremely popular, there is a temptation for a humorous man to draw upon it too freely. But the minister may not make himself, though it be for the nonce, a Merry Andrew, a clown in clericals. His judgment must guide him as to what is, and what is not, befitting the dignity and sacredness of his office. And the test is this : “Am I enhancing or depreciating my influence for good by these jokes, comical stories, and fun-producing attitudes which characterise the soiree speech.”) If the answer is No, then eliminate the extravagances and be simply the genial pastor.

My last point is, Temper. A minister without one is an engine without a boiler. “He’s a fine man, the minister, always pleased ;” or, “he’s a guidless, ill-less kind o’ man,” is the parochial verdict on No. 1, who smiles and simpers with a bland beneficence that covers one or other of two things, incapacity or insincerity. “A perfect fire-brand,” is the public verdict on No. 2, who has not learned quietly to bite the lip, and bridle the tongue. By all means the minister should have a temper, but let him have it under constant and complete control. Let no

rash and hasty word mar his ministry. He should rebuke when it has to be done with firmness, tempered by gentleness. Let the holy oil of charity smooth and subdue the turbulent waves of anger.

CHAPTER III

The Minister's Intellectual Outfit

I HAVE already outlined, first, the nature, the sphere, and conditions of a modern minister's work ; and, second, the various essentials or personal qualifications necessary for the efficient discharge of his office. Now I come to closer quarters, to the minister's intellectual outfit, to the examination in critical detail of all its parts—their quality, their quantity, their meaning, and how they are each and all to be used.

And I place first, a full and familiar acquaintance with the text of the Authorised Version of the English Bible. Of course every student knows the English Bible in a kind of way, but many do not know it in the kind of way necessary for a minister whose hand-book and *vade-mecum* it must ever be. What I mean by knowing the English Bible is not merely to be acquainted in a general way with the drift of its contents from Genesis to Revelation—not merely to know Bible history, geography, and biography, not merely to

know intimately the characters there portrayed in the setting, historic or dramatic, in which they appear; but to have besides all that a ready, quotable familiarity with the *ipsissima verba* of Holy Scripture. The minister must have the text of Scripture on his tongue and be able without trouble and without hesitation to quote it correctly, on the spur of the moment. Some may say, "This is a large order." I reply very deliberately, "Not too large for the business." It is all needed, and he that does not possess it, whatever else be his attainments, is poorly equipped for his career.

How, it may be asked, are students, amid all their other work and engagements, to get this easy familiarity with the text of Scripture? My answer is: "This is an important work to be done; other work, other studies, must be relegated to a secondary place. The Bible holds the first, and may not be ousted by any other claimant on your time and attention whatsoever. What I say is this: "Work your hand Bible hard." Let it be thumbbed and marked and as disreputable to look at as may be. Go on working at it. It is your log, your compass, your wheel, your main mast, larboard, starboard, sailing orders all in one. Jettisonise all other cargo, if necessary: but not this. Read, read regularly, till you are as perfectly familiar with all the nooks and corners of the Bible as you are with the house you live in."

N.B.

Then for the gems. You come across them here and there. The Bible is a mine where the diamonds have to be dug for through mountains of rubbish. The minister should do the digging as he reads, and when he comes on treasures, annex them. Let him make them his very own and put them safely one by one into the pigeon-holes of his memory. Let him take the best bits of the Psalms, the ecstatic passages of the Prophets, the purple patches of the Gospels and Epistles and memorise them. It is not a herculean task ; anybody can do it. The memorising of *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *In Memoriam* is but a week's work. The memorising of the best bits of the Psalter, Isaiah, the Gospels, the Epistles, the Apocalypse is a task not beyond the range of any student in Divinity. And when, in the long day of his ministry, he reckons up the things that have proved most helpful, I should be surprised if he comes to any other conclusion than that to which I have come long ago, namely, that the memorised acquaintance with the text of the English Bible stands first. In prayers, private and public, in the visitation of the sick, in the consolation of the bereaved, in all his work from beginning to end the minister will find these memorised passages most serviceable.

"I fear the man of one book" is an old proverb. A minister armed with the Bible is strong ; without it he is vulnerable at all points.

It is to the illustration of the Bible that all a minister's literary and professional studies are chiefly to be directed. His classical literature, his logic and psychology, his history, his English literature in all its branches, his principles and practice of rhetoric, his studies of the original text of Scripture, his systematic theology—all are subservient to this main purpose—a perfect acquaintance with the Book of books. (Every study, every man he meets, every journey he takes, every experience of life, a work day, a holiday, a hobby, all should be made contributory to the ministerial exchequer.) Such affluents broaden and deepen the river of God from which every minister must perpetually draw. They fertilise the fallow ground and make a ministry rich with many golden sheaves.

It has been the experience of many a congregation—and a disappointing experience it is—that the minister's sermons grow duller, drier, more mechanical and insipid, as the years go by. It also has been the experience of many another congregation that, as the years pass, the sermons they hear grow richer, more interesting, more aptly illustrated, more chastened in style, more impressive in their spirituality. Searching into the wherefore of this difference it will generally be found that the former of these two types of preachers started well with a small balance to his credit. On that he drew, and

drew, adding mere scraps to the deposit side of his bankbook—result, ere long, dishonoured cheque—no funds. The fund of ideas and illustrations has become exhausted. Such ministers have not kept up what of learning they had, and they have added nothing to its sum. They have quite discarded their college studies as no longer of any use. Latin, rusty ; Greek, evaporating ; Hebrew, like the wilderness of Sin ; philosophy, a nebula ; theology, a truck of granite blocks from the university quarry still lying in the backyard at the manse. All living interest has been diverted into every channel but the one to which all the life streams should have converged—the one that supplied the pulpit. No wonder the rostrum is dry, and its occupant ready for translation, if he can get it. If the stock-in-trade be scanty at best and is not replenished, it is best to close the store, or change the agent.

The other type of preacher presents a striking contrast. He keeps up his studies and his habits of study. His classical learning matures, he reads his Greek Testament daily, keeps his German up-to-date, reads widely in philosophy and English literature, feels the pulse of modern thought, is conversant with the new ideas in science, economics, and sociology, and, what is of still greater importance, he makes them all bear directly on his pulpit and pastoral work. He gathers flowers from every field of practical experience wherewith to adorn and illus-

trate his religious teaching; and he keeps the windows of his soul wide open towards Jerusalem. Thus his personality becomes enriched, and the streams that make glad his city of God, broaden and deepen as the years pass. "A tree of life shall grow out of my pulpit," said a minister of Lochcarron, "and bear fruit abundantly in the long coming days." So is it with every preacher who lives for his work. His sermons are inspired, they never lose interest and never grow stale. For a ministry thus equipped, there can never cease to be a high place in public estimation, and a never-failing demand. Let secularism say or do its utmost to discredit such a ministry, the fact remains that man by his very constitution is a religious being, and requires and demands the ministry of religion. Men and opinions come and go, sects and churches flourish and decay, but the ministry of religion must for ever abide.

(The Bible then should be a minister's handbook illuminated by the Spirit of God.) It should be illustrated on the one hand by all the knowledge he can gather about the book itself, and by all the sidelights of science he finds available, and on the other by all his knowledge of human nature, and of the thoughts, ideas, and spiritual needs of the men and women of the present day. N.C.

I have already had occasion to point out as one of the difficulties of the modern preacher, that a great

change of opinion regarding the relative value and significance of the books which compose the canon of Scripture—a change amounting to a revolution—has come over the minds of modern Christians, and will be found represented and reflected in the pews. With that change the preacher has to deal in one way or another. He may ignore it altogether and preach and expound as he would have done had he been called to minister to our grandfathers. Such a course can hardly be called heroic nor is it expedient. It is doubtful even if it could be described as honest. We do not get over difficulties by deliberately ignoring them. They are there and must be met. Another course, and one a good deal resorted to a quarter of a century ago or more, but now largely abandoned, is to deny the validity of all the conclusions of modern Biblical criticism, denounce the critics as wilful or mistaken enemies of the truth of God, and with desperate earnestness, warn the modern Christian to beware of the seductions of new and dangerous opinions. There is a third course, and one worth consideration. It is to inquire diligently and discover what the conclusions of present day criticism amount to, and whether they bear adversely on that precious truth of God which the minister must defend.

As to the conclusions themselves, I may say again that it lies quite outside my present sphere to discuss them, but it may be admitted that the

leaders of modern Biblical investigation, or the Higher Critics, as they have come to be called, are pious, learned, reverent, and spiritually-minded men whose one desire has been to illumine the sacred page with the light of historic and archæological truth. They yield to none in the love and reverence they bear to God's great book from whose divine message to man no criticism can detract, and whose fine gold no critical assaying can tarnish.

What then do the Higher Critics claim to have discovered? I shall give a few samples by way of illustration.

(1) The Pentateuch, or Hexateuch, is a composite production belonging to an age considerably later than that of Moses. Its unknown authors present legend, tradition, and fancy on a partially historic background, dates, names, and facts being mainly conjectural.

(2) The era of literary and prophetic activity, so notable and rich, began not earlier than the first years of the eighth century, B.C.

(3) The prophetically-edited annals of the Kings and the priestly recension in Chronicles cannot be reconciled, and cannot both be correct.

(4) The Psalms of David are a collection of sacred songs by unknown writers ranging from the age of David to that of the Maccabees.

(5) The Books of Ruth, Jonah, and Job are

non-historic belonging to the category of idyllic, dramatic, or didactic poetry.

(6) The Book of Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon do not belong to the age of Solomon but to post-exilic times.

(7) The Book of Esther is neither historical nor religious.

(8) The Book of Daniel is an apocalypse of the age of the Maccabees and is not history.

(9) The Book of Isaiah is at least two, if not three or four, books by different authors living at considerable intervals from one another.

(10) The authorship and date of the fourth Gospel are unsettled; the authorship of the Apocalypse doubtful. Second Peter and Jude are unauthenticated, as are certain Epistles attributed to Saint Paul but belonging to a post-Pauline period.

(11) Science has demolished the Mosaic account of the Creation and of the universal deluge, while the passage of the Red Sea, the walls of Jericho, the sun and moon standing still, and other anomalies are incredible.

Such is a fair summary of the results of the labours of the Higher Critics.

Now it is well to remember that these opinions, right or wrong, exist among the educated and most intelligent classes of the people. By merely ignoring you do not, as I have said, get quit of them, were even that desirable; far less do you

make progress by abusing from the pulpit the Higher Critics and their sympathisers. But is there any imperative necessity for a minister to adopt either of these alternatives? There is surely a more excellent way of dealing with the conclusions of the Higher Criticism. A minister should face them, should estimate their value as bearing on his message, and act accordingly.

I fully admit that these conclusions, staggering and unsettling though they may be, have been reached by Biblical experts who are equipped with a knowledge and training not usually found in the pulpit, still more rarely in the pew. Fortunately, the minister's sphere of operations is not restricted to such research, nor is he even required to transform himself into a professor of Biblical criticism, nor to invite the man in the pew to follow him through labyrinths of Biblical lore. Such subjects, under careful supervision, may be made matters of study in literary and Y.M.C.A. gatherings, but should not be discussed at the ordinary church service. A congregation of Christian worshippers is no more a Biblical Criticism class than it is a political meeting. It is properly occupied solely with religion.

It is for this reason that the conclusions of the Higher Critics present no terrors to the minister of Christ. They simply do not enter his sphere. Just let it be hypothetically conceded that all

the eleven items above enumerated are practically true. Stands the preacher where he did? Is his occupation gone? Has his Bible vanished? Assuredly not. What bearing has the authorship and date of the Pentateuch, or that of any book in the Bible, on the meaning and applicability to the souls of sinful men of the Gospel of the grace of God through Jesus Christ revealed and in His name proclaimed? The books of the Bible, ere the Higher Critics dealt with them, were hesitatingly spoken of as by such and such an author. What special value did the author's name give to his book? Simply none at all. (The books of the Bible stand on their own merits, and possess inherent sacredness and power springing from, and depending solely on, the message from God, which they in lesser or in larger measure contain and convey. We do not know the author of the Book of Esther, and the Higher Critics say they are not sure who wrote the fourth Gospel. Has a common anonymity aught to do with their intrinsic value? Does the power and excellence of Deuteronomy depend on whether Moses or anybody else wrote it? Doubtless the period and the environment in which an author lived, once clearly ascertained, does help the reader to understand the references and the message of a book, but no author's signature appended to Esther or Ecclesiastes could have raised or lowered the moral and

spiritual position which these works occupy in the estimation of every intelligent reader. To get definite information about the authors and the times in which they lived has been the chief business of the Higher Critic.) Biblical investigation is a province of learning like analytical geometry, and in so far as the Higher Critics have succeeded, they have added enormously to the interest, intelligibility, and value of the sacred page. For this the Churches owe them a deep debt of gratitude. They have made the Bible a new and a not less divine and glorious record. But they have not changed, nor have they in any way affected the Evangel of God which, from the still small voice of the prophetic past to the great organ swell of our Christian Age rings through the Bible.

One thing of supreme importance to the understanding of the Bible has assuredly been effected. Emancipation from the slavery of the letter has opened the sacred Book as never before to the supreme significance and imperishable value of its spiritual content. As an impregnable rock against the tyrannous authority of Rome, the Reformers declared the Bible verbally inspired, infallible, inerrant from beginning to end, as if written by the finger of God and vouched by the sign manual of the Almighty. That position was soon found to be untenable. Luther himself dared to speak of the Epistle of St. James as a straw Epistle; and the

whole trend of intelligent Christianity since his day has been in the direction of reverent discrimination. The letter killeth, the Spirit quickeneth, and so the whole Bible is given back to us imbued, as ever, with the inspiring spirit of the living God. In this sense it is to be expounded. (The Bible is a record, as men were able to understand them, of the things of the spirit which God is for ever revealing to receptive souls.) "The Word of God quick, powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow, a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart," is not the text of the Bible, but the inspiring and revealing Spirit of God operating through man in a variety of ways. Of that Divine cause the Bible is but an effect, and so far from being treated, quoted, and referred to as though it were a mere bundle of oracles, it is to be sifted and searched in order that there may be discovered behind the text what the Spirit of God did signify.

Regarded from this standpoint, there is no danger to be apprehended from the fullest and most searching examination of the whole contents of the sacred Scriptures. (All honest, reverent, and competent criticism should rather be welcomed.) The Bible in its true and sacred sense can suffer no harm, as the self-evidencing truth of God lies in a sphere where no criticism can reach it.

Not there lies the danger, but there is danger

none the less. It is possible, nay, there is a temptation for a young minister, full of the Higher Criticism and not yet realising how little its results have to do with the Gospel of Christ, to state bluntly some critical conclusion that may be distressful to pious hearers. For instance, the preacher may be satisfied that the Book of Daniel is not history but apocalypse, and feels called upon to unburden his soul upon the matter. He thereupon declares that Daniel never lived, that the fiery furnace, and the den of lions, and Nebuchadnezzar's grass-eating madness are purely imaginary, and never existed save in the mind of a pious, patriotic, nameless Jew in the late age of the Maccabees, who concocted the whole story to encourage his compatriots to bear up patiently under the oppression of Antiochus Epiphanes. That may be all true, but to express such a view suddenly and unguardedly would be singularly injudicious. The rustics might gaze and wonder how much was left of the Bible that they could believe, while some good old lady would feel that the minister had torn a few precious leaves out of her Holy Bible, and would leave the service agitated, it may be angry, but assuredly not benefited nor edified in the Faith. Such a minister would be a blunderer; assuredly no artist. He would yet have to learn to touch even prejudices that are embedded in religious faith with a skilful and delicate hand. Clearly an educative process was necessary in the case of such dear old

ladies as those to whom I have referred. They have to be gently led along the road that leads to a better understanding of Daniel. (Everything depends on the gentleness of the leading, the wisdom, good sense, and consideration with which it is done, and above all on the fine Christian tenderness and tactfulness that wins and commands confidence.)

In the right spirit and in the right way, a minister may say almost anything to people who have learnt to trust and love him, without the shadow of offence. But in any other circumstances let him walk warily, for he is on very treacherous ground. Remember how the first gospel messengers were warned by the Master not to make enemies or stir up prejudices in people's minds, but to speak or to hold their peace as circumstances should require, lest the cause should be hindered by precipitate and unskilful advocacy. ("Be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves.") The most successful of the Apostles was also the most versatile. He knew the way, the winning, insinuating, diplomatic way, to get his Master's message safely home. "For," says he, "though I be free from all, yet have I made myself servant unto all that I might gain the more. Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews. To them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak. I am made all things to all men that

I might by all means save some : And this I do for the Gospel's sake." Elsewhere he adds : " Giving no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed, but in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God."

Paul's advice might well be translated by the modern minister thus : " Unto the Higher Critic, I also became a Higher Critic that I might gain the Higher Critic—Unto the unlearned, the hind, and the rustic I became as unlearned, that I might make a prize of the hind and the rustic and bring them into the captivity of Christ." So say I finally. In all this difficult and delicate matter of the Higher Criticism let the minister walk wearily. Hide his opinions as occasion befits, for they are but opinions on externals and non-essentials. Let the dear old lady keep her fiery furnace, and her Jonah's whale, and all the rest of it rather than be offended and turned sorrowfully away from the Christly influence and ministry. Christ first and last, criticism anywhere the minister can find room for it, but never where it will prove an obstacle to Gospel influence.

Before leaving this great subject of how the wise and successful minister should deal with the Scriptures, I wish to direct attention to the right and wrong ways of using Scripture texts.

Texts, some people say, are a minister's greatest legacy, the implication being that the Bible is

N.B. but a bundle of texts written for the express purpose of being preached upon or used as the headings for sermons. But they were written for no such purpose. The Old Testament is the product of the religious thought and experience of Israel throughout many centuries; and so far from the New Testament producing Christianity, it was the Christian faith that produced it. The religion in both cases was first; the ritual, the institutions, and the written records followed. The Prophets of Judaism and the Evangelists and Apostles of Christ were in living contact with the great Spirit of Truth, and what they expressed in language that has come down to us in the old and new Scriptures was but part of the effect of that contact. It quickened their emotions, raised their moral ideals, and produced the spiritual revolution of which the Bible record is but one of the incidents. The Evangelists were Christians first, and compilers of the precious memorabilia of Jesus afterwards, and the letters of Apostles and apostolic men were but explanatory, corrective, and inspiring notes, mostly incidental, addressed to Christian believers. The transmission of Christianity doubtless owes much to these memoranda; (but it was the religion of Jesus Christ already in the hearts of the writers that produced the memoranda and made them what they are, exceeding precious.) The writers had no intention of making Christianity a book

of faith, nor of rounding it off as a finished and final revelation. They expressed only so much of Christianity as they knew, prophesied in part, and anticipated greater things for the Church which could draw as they had done from the perennial source of Revelation.

In dealing, therefore, with Old Testament texts, it is the expositor's first business to get into living and sympathetic contact with the ideas about God, the world, man, duty, and destiny out of which the text was generated. Then he must commune with the author if he can be found, breathe the air he breathed, and realise his environment. Only in so far as this is successfully accomplished can the author's meaning be thoroughly grasped. It is a difficult task requiring research, knowledge of times, facts, and conditions, as well as a keen and a vivid spiritual apprehension. Historical imagination thus equipped, the minister will not endorse the foolish mistakes of the dull commentators who had no difficulty in finding anything and everything that their wayward fancy desired, the Trinity in Esther, the doctrine of Immortality in Ecclesiastes, the Atonement in Job, the Gospel in Ezekiel, the Messiah in Numbers, and Justification by Faith in Nehemiah. It is still quite possible to abuse the old Scriptures of Judaism by treating them as old bottles, into which is poured the new wine of the Gospel. But the days of juggling with the

Bible are wellnigh past, and the days of scientific investigation have come. We may not trifle with the truth of God nor deal with it in the spirit of necromancers. The men of to-day to whose souls and intellects the minister appeals, demand honest, intelligent, and sincerely religious treatment of the precious memoranda bequeathed to us by pious men of the old time, who each in his own day and in the measure of his receptivity was moved by the inspiring Spirit of God.

So is it with the texts of the New Testament. The preacher is blind to the significance of the gospels who merely reads these sacred scraps and fragments (for they are nothing more) as the fundamental statements of the Christian Faith to be handled as oracles and expounded so. His first task is not with these, but to get behind them and into living contact with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, about whom these stories are told and from whose lips these Divine utterances are quoted. The preacher must see and know and love Christ, who Himself gave the world no written message at all but a living Christianity. Without a vision of Christ in the beauty of His holiness, the sublimity of His ideal, the pure devotion of His life for love's sake, the amazing depth of His charity, the divineness of His sacrifice—without this vision, the Gospels are unintelligible—words, empty words—conundrums without a key.

From this Divine fountain all the waters flow. The Epistles are but rivulets flowing down to refresh the Church, owing all their virtue to their source. In themselves they are nothing. It is the living Christ that makes them what they are. With a spiritual eye you can readily discriminate their relative value. Do you feel the touch of the Christ as you read? That is, God's inspired and inspiring word to you. Or is it disputation or explanation about things whose meaning and interest are long ago dead? You find such things in the Epistles. They pass you by—God is not in the wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire: but in the still small voice that recalls the living Christ.

I have said that to expound a text the minister must first get behind it to a real appreciation of the spirit which prompted its expression. Then he must discover the circumstances in which and, if possible, the man to whom the word of God came. But when this is done, all is not done; you only as yet stand abreast of the text, you are still eighteen centuries, or it may be eight-and-twenty centuries, behind the times. You know what Isaiah or St. Paul meant to express. But spiritual truth has not been stagnant in the interval. The Spirit of God that taught the Prophet and the Apostle has been teaching all down the centuries, revealing to pious souls the mysteries of the Divine mind. Has He added nothing to what they knew of God and of man and of the religion which unites them?

Assuredly He has added much. We know more than the Prophet, more than the Apostle, if for no other reason than that we have seen in the principles they enunciated a breadth and a depth of applicability of which they could not, even in their most spiritual and prophetic moods, have had any conception. With an added richness and a profounder depth of spiritual meaning gathered through these ages of Divine education, these inspired utterances have come down to us. We drink from the ever-flowing, ever-broadening, ever-deepening river of Divine communication. And so in a bigger, broader world of humanity and religious experience we deal with and apply the golden texts of prophecy and grace; for the thoughts of men and the thought of God as he reveals it are broadening with the progress of the suns. To the living souls of the twentieth century we are called to preach not a merely apostolic but a twentieth century Gospel.

It is to such a Gospel—a Gospel not received by mere mechanical transmission from the apostolic or any other age—but alive with the thought and inspiration of our own day, that the hearts and minds of modern men will yield a willing response. The gulf that seems to separate our age from that of the prophets, the evangelists, and the apostles is bridged, and God is with us as inspiring, as uplifting, as powerful as He was with them. Such a view of an ever-living, ever-growing Christianity

makes it easy for the minister to find texts, and instructs him what to do with them when found. It is the subject or aspect of some truth of God that he has to find first. When he has found and pondered that the texts will find him in dozens. It is said to be a common experience of ministers that they waste many hours wandering through the Bible oft-times on the very brink of despair as the Sunday draws ominously near, seeking a text. The prophets, the histories, the evangelists, the apostles are gone through again and again and all looks hopeless. The minister comes upon some stray expression that looks like a suitable text, but can make nothing of it. It looked like bread at first, but has turned out a stone. Just so, the fault lies with the minister. He began at the wrong end by seeking something to expound, and having nothing of which to unburden his soul, he naturally discovered a wilderness of sand and stones. My advice to a minister so situated is to get into the spirit of prophecy first and the prophets will speak, the very wheels of Ezekiel will respond, and the valley of dry bones be quickened. Get into the spirit of the Gospel—and the Evangelist will not be dumb—the Apostolic letters will interest you as if they had been posted yesterday, and the deserts of the Apocalypse will rejoice and blossom as the rose. To him that hath shall be given.

The Bible has been compared to a well-tuned fiddle. Responsive to the artist's bow, it will laugh or

cry, sound out discords from hollow depths of despair,
or sing hallelujahs at Heaven's gate. Bring the spirit
to the Bible and it will be responsive to your touch,
evolving and expressing more than you have wit
enough to seek. Then when the subject in its main
import has been excogitated and the text found give
the Bible fair play. Let it speak first and last. If
a minister leans like a cripple on a commentary his
sermon will also be lame, for the writers of comment-
aries are usually found leaning on some cut-and-dried
system of theology, which they make the text confirm
and express regardless of all the principles of spiritual
exegesis. The preacher should also eschew for a like
reason all ready-made skeletons of sermons offered
cheap by publishers. A living sermon will never be
produced by clothing other people's skeletons.
Above all, the preacher should never read a sermon
on the subject or text he has chosen. If the sermon
is good—say by a Caird, a Beecher, a Robertson of
Brighton—he will fail to make more of his own than
a mere echo. If the sermon be poor or out-of-date,
the preacher only confuses his mind and wastes his
time in reading it. His own sermon may be a poor
thing, as too many sermons are, but let it be his very
own, the best he can do. Besides, as Dr. Watson of
Dundee said to me more than thirty years ago, “Cows
should not be fed on milk.” The preacher should
compose his mind first, his sermon afterwards. Let
him get into the right spirit and the right interpreta-

tion of the text will follow. Let the Bible speak, and he need not fear, out of the resources he is accumulating and by the aid of the Spirit of God, of having a message, and a good one, to deliver.

Many years ago I remember Spurgeon, who was not an exegetical scholar, delivering a telling discourse on the text, "He restoreth my soul." He pictured a vast store at the Port of London, wherein had been accumulated through years a heterogeneous mass of rubbish, bales of old and damaged goods, refuse from the holds of foreign ships, an unsavoury and insanitary mass piled from the basement to the sixth floor. That was the human soul crammed full of, and contaminated with, the wares of the world—evil passions, corrupt desires, and manifold ungodliness. A great fire broke out—you can fancy how Spurgeon could describe a fire. You could see the flare and hear the crackle and the crash of falling timbers. That was the fire of God's converting grace, mighty to destroy. The warehouse once gutted is rebuilt or repaired. New goods and precious wares fit for a king's ransom are carefully stored in the space formerly occupied by the old debris. "God re-storeth my soul," says the preacher, with His own precious gifts of grace till it is filled up and up with His choicest treasures.

Now this may be all very true and very effectively handled by a master, but it is wholly foreign to the text of the Twenty-third Psalm, and as far away from

the Psalmist's thought, as London is from the plains of Bethlehem. After all, the Psalmist's meaning was better than Spurgeon's, and to allow a far away illustration to swallow up the text is a kind of exegesis not to be imitated.

There is another extreme equally dangerous though in a different way. Half a dozen or more verses are selected, evidently on the principle that the preacher having been driven out from one, might have other cities of refuge. This is neither preaching nor exegesis. I knew a minister who made it somewhat of a boast that he never worried over searching for a text. He simply took a book of the Bible and expounded it passage by passage. Surely the forty years' wandering in the wilderness was a mild experience compared to this. Another minister I knew, feeling it his duty to expound to his people Saint Paul's Epistle to the Romans, took it up verse by verse every Sunday forenoon, a task upon which he was engaged for thirteen years. It is hardly a compliment to any letter writer in or out of Scripture to admit that it should take thirteen years of hard laborious exposition to enable the reader to reach its import. A minister once published an edition of the *Pilgrim's Progress* with voluminous notes. The big half of the edition remaining unsold, he generously distributed copies among the humbler classes of his parishioners. One day, meeting a favoured recipient, he asked : " Well, Margaret ! how

are you getting on with the *Pilgrim's Progress*? Are you understanding it?" "Oh yes, sir, thank you. I never had any difficulty wi' the *Pilgrim*; he's very clear. An' now, I'm beginning to see the drift o' some o' the Notes."

There are notes, and expositions, and sermons that serve no purpose but to obscure in a cloud of wordy irrelevance the plainest and simplest truths of the Bible. It is not profitable work to paint the lily, nor is it the function of a preacher either to waste time in trying to make clear what is perfectly explicit, or in trying to explain the inexplicable. Far better for a minister to say frankly to his people that he does not understand a subject, than to offer an explanation that explains nothing, but only makes the darkness visible.

N.B.

CHAPTER IV

The Preacher in the Making

I HAVE already dealt with the general and special equipments necessary for the effective discharge of the multifarious duties of a minister. These all bear on the pulpit directly or indirectly. I now propose to treat of the specific equipment and training necessary for a preacher as such, all the other qualifications and attainments already dealt with being pre-supposed. Even with all these, the minister may still fail as a preacher, for there is much of what on the stage is called "business," and much of what may be called the method and art of oratory yet to be acquired. While it is true that in the highest sense "*Orator nascitur non fit*," it is also true that for ordinary purposes the art of the orator and his methods may be studied with advantage, and to some extent acquired by men who do not claim to be born orators.

It is assumed that a preacher whose medium of communication is the English language should acquire a familiar acquaintance with that medium.

There are models almost countless. No language probably is so rich, so idiomatic, so plastic for the expression of all the shades of meaning and all the tones of human feeling. No language used by man ever required so large a dictionary to hold its vocables. No preacher, ancient or modern, ever possessed so large a vocabulary or enjoyed so wide a field of expression. (Now the pulpit has a high standard. Nothing but the best will satisfy its requirements.) It must be English without reproach. The style, pure, clean-cut, well-balanced, idiomatic, and fluent. Every valley of obscurity must be exalted, every mountain of redundancy must be made low. The crooked in thought and in syntax must be made straight, and the rough places plain. The word to be used is the one which best expresses the sense. (The fewer technical, philosophical, and abstract terms employed the better.) Words like concatenation, differentiation, ratiocination, apotheosis, altruism, forensically, *et hoc genus omne*, suitable enough in a class-room, are usually unsuitable in a sermon. These should be ruthlessly struck out, for whatever the preacher may be in other respects, he fails if unintelligible. Each sentence should carry its message easily, and with unflinching directness. It should not be overloaded with supplementary bales and bundles that only impede its progress. No high-sounding, involved, and inflated sentences where the unhappy nominative

goes to sleep, while the speaker flounders in a bog of adjectival phrases and correlatives, are of any use for the exposition or enforcement of truth. They are but words signifying nothing and doing ditto.

N.B. Need it be said that all vulgar references, quoted or original, are to be avoided, and that whatever savours of bad taste and bad breeding or of indelicacy is to be absolutely banned. There is no place for them in a sermon. They contaminate the house of God, degrade religion, and alienate the hearts of the worshippers. (The preacher is not restricted to the use of a lady's fan: he may use, when necessary, a sledge hammer and speak in the name of God, the strongest, the most incisive, things; but in doing so he must be, in tone and action, all that is expected of a cultured, Christian gentleman.) The sanctity and dignity of his office, never forgotten in the highest ecstasy of his oration, will keep the preacher safe and lend power and authority to all he says. A minister may, nay in the exercise of his office must, at times say things hard to say and hard to hear; but in the spirit of Christ's ambassador—and only in that spirit—can he say them with edification and without offence?

So far vocabulary and phrase. I now come to the language of the pulpit—vocal on the preacher's lips. And here many may at first

think the matters to be dealt with small and insignificant. But it is not so. There is no detail so small or insignificant but may either help or hinder in the preaching of a sermon. I have known not a few exceedingly able ministers who failed, comparatively, as preachers because they would not or could not condescend to such details of a preacher's equipment as I am about to set forth.

The vocal language required in the pulpit is English—pure, correct, idiomatic, and rightly pronounced. How is this condition to be best fulfilled? The standard of English pronunciation is hard to find. Each county or locality has its own; and few indeed either in England or Scotland can be altogether commended as a model. Divinity students should hear the best actors on the stage, the best pleaders at the bar, the best speakers on political platforms, the best lecturers, and a few of the best preachers. Such men have by hard discipline learned to rub off the local asperities and to speak the language pure and clear without local tone and accent. Young ministers should sit at their feet as students of articulation, vocalisation, and accentuation. Let the music of speech assail their ears. Ear culture first—then the culture of one's own voice on Nature's principle of imitation. Such practice will prove of inestimable value to every preacher who comes to know

and feel that a local accent is a blemish that must be removed at all costs.

Every man is partial to his own local accent even after he comes to realise that he has one. Early association has made it clear to him. It is part of his second self, nevertheless it must be eradicated. The test of success in this process is easily found. The congregation should be unable to discover whether the preacher hails from Aberdeen, Glasgow, Caithness, or Wigtown. Each of these has an intonation that marks out the speaker as provincial, and of too many—far too many—ministers can it be said as was said to Peter long ago—"Thou art a Galilean, thy speech bewrayeth thee." In saying this I am not suggesting that a minister should aim at the language of Oxford. In a Scotsman it is usually a silly conceit; there is no need to be ashamed of a Scottish accent, only care should be taken that it be not local. Analyse the dialect of any district, and you will discover that it arises from a mispronunciation of one or other of the vowels. On the Borders nearly all the o's are cut short. A Borderer says gröss for grōss; extöl for extōl; ghöst for ghōst; röll for rōll; Gūd for God; clōse for clōse; "the ile of jiy for morning"; and so on. In middle Scotland, the flat "a" is broadened, father becomes fawther or fōther; gäther becomes gāther; valley becomes vāwley; even "o" long and short becomes "āā" "Ah Gāād" for "O God." But I need not

continue the catalogue of lingual stumbling-blocks. They are neither useful nor ornamental, and are often as offensive to a cultured ear as is a note of music out of scale. If young ministers have not succeeded in the battle against bad English as other professional men have done, it must either be that they have remained unconscious of the necessity of the struggle, or have lacked the determination to grapple with the defect.

(I am not exaggerating when I say that correct pronunciation is of the first importance to a preacher.) A few wrongly pronounced words will wreck the prospects of the best student when he comes to be a candidate for the ministry. Just as a wrongly spelt word in a letter of application for a charge is fatal, so a few mispronunciations in a trial sermon settle the matter of a life appointment. There was occasion once to tell a young minister that just as a certain small boat carried the fortunes of Cæsar, so one verse of a little hymn carried his. He announced "O for a closer walk with Gud." Though he preached well, he is not in the parish he was then applying for. The actor and the advocate spare no pains to polish their pronunciation into unchallengeable correctness, and surely the minister of religion, whose message transcends in importance all other messages, should bate no jot of toil and trouble to make the vehicle of the Gospel as swift and perfect as labour can make it.

From words I pass to phrases, clauses, and sentences. A sentence is a living thing quick with the pulse of thought from beginning to end. Words and phrases are its living components. They must be responsive to the current of thought and of emotion. Each word and phrase must be alive and play its part for the common end. The speaker or reader must realise this living unity, and give to every word and phrase its proper place and power. An accent on the wrong word, a pause in the wrong place, not only kills the word or phrase, but breaks the spinal cord of the sentence which falls into two dead halves. A false sense of rhythm is usually responsible for much of the mischief.

"I waited on' the Lord and He heard me'.

"The Lord is' my strength.

"For thine *is* the kingdom *and* the power and' the glory.

"Come *unto* Me all ye *that* labour and *are* heavy laden.

"And he said un'to his sons, saddle me' the ass, so they saddled him' the ass' and he rode thereon."

It is needless to multiply examples, but useful to point out that all accentuation suggests contrast and usually contrariety. I met him on' the road—*i.e.*, not off the road. I called up'on the Lord, suggests no alternative, and is therefore nearly nonsense. A false or meaningless emphasis reduces the finest sentence to the dead level of platitude. The prophets

suffered in their day by being sawn asunder. In too many Christian pulpits their ecstatic sentences, alas! have suffered a similar fate. The reader is required to express the sense, the whole sense, and nothing but the sense of the passage he reads. Nor is all done when this is done. All the feeling must be conveyed in a living vocal stream along with the meaning, or you have not done justice to your part. Who has not heard the most pathetic passages of Scripture—David's lamentation for Saul and Jonathan, the Prodigal Son, the 40th chapter of Isaiah—shouted in a senseless monotony as if the phrases were items in an auctioneer's catalogue? And all this waste of opportunity and, if you think of it, dishonour is done to the holiest of books, because the preacher did not think it necessary to learn to read.

It has been suggested that this traditionally colourless and expressionless style of reading the Scriptures is to be accounted for on the ground that reverence for the contents of the Bible precluded preachers in the old days from attempting to read them, as they would have read other books with natural ease, grace, and expression. The poetry and the prose, the statistics and the dramatic episodes, were all treated indiscriminately with dull solemnity. If this be the origin of the notoriously bad pulpit reading, which has so long prevailed and is not yet a thing of the past, all I say is that it is the duty of every minister imbued with a high sense of his calling,

to bring about a root and branch reformation without delay. No man honours the Scriptures by refusing to let them speak in their own natural moods and tones. He honours and reveres them most who spares no pains, intellectual and elocutionary, to make the dead letter quick with its pristine thought and feeling. Nor does he honour the Bible who takes it for public reading, *ad aperturam*, anywhere. The fallacy that it is all on a dead level and all equally profitable has been exploded. Selection must be made after careful and reverent scrutiny. I have known ministers so obstinately devoted to the old ideas of verbal inspiration, that they have refused to cut and carve God's Word, as they put it, and have publicly read straight on chapter by chapter, and book by book. We may admire the heroism of such a practice, but cannot commend it for imitation. The Christian taste and conscience of our day condemn and forbid it. To put it frankly, there are many sections of the Bible which it is absolutely improper and even scandalous to read, either in the church or in the family circle. Avoid such portions with care. They doubtless serve a purpose where they are, but are not for public perusal or edification.

Some churches and ministers have seen fit to make use of a lectionary. Notably, the Church of England Book of Common Prayer provides sections of the Gospels and Epistles, and a lectionary for use in public worship, to correspond with what are called

the Sacred Seasons of the year. There is a weak spot in all authorised lectionaries. They tend to diminish rather than increase that general knowledge of the Holy Scriptures on the part of the congregation, which public services are, among other things, designed and calculated to foster. With the lectionary lessons always to the front, the Bible as a whole tends to be forgotten, unread, unknown, to the detriment of religion. Moreover, as constantly associated with sacred seasons of the year, the iterated lectionary tends undoubtedly to give these seasons an adventitious place and prominence which, from a religious point of view, they do not inherently deserve.

Sacred seasons of the year, unknown in the Scottish churches, belong to the category of "weak and beggarly elements," the resuscitation of which, if adding to the mechanical orderliness would at best add nothing to the spirituality of our services. Red tape and liberty do not usually go together, and we prefer the latter. It is part of our heritage, and is better worth preserving than all we could gain by a return to the old bondage of times and seasons, holy days, fasts, festivals, and a sacred year. Moreover, a fixed or adopted lectionary either binds the preacher to its forms, compelling him to tune his sermons as the sacred year revolves, or, if he refuse to be so enchained, produces a medley of service—the lectionary singing one tune and the sermon another. There is no compromise possible. Either the season,

■ mechanical thing, or the sermon, a spiritual thing, must predominate. Scotland prefers the spiritual as the dominating factor. Yet there is no reason why every minister should not have a lectionary. It is his function as a spiritual interpreter to discover and utilise for his people all the sections and passages of Scripture through which as media he has heard the word of the living God. These passages are his Bible, and from these he can readily select readings illustrative of, or at least in harmony with, the spiritual idea which pervades, and indeed originates his sermon, if it be a living one. Under such conditions holy times and seasons marked on the calendar shrink into nothingness.

The passages found should not be read in a mechanical spirit and rounded off with a "here endeth," but in the spirit in which they issued from the prophetic soul that gave them from God. Let Isaiah shout, remonstrate, denounce, Ezekiel lift his wings and wheels, Amos wield his threshing flail, the Psalmists beat their wings at Heaven's gate, the Apostles thunder reason, and with tearful eyes plead with human souls. Go with the Apocalypticist through Heaven's open door and report for him the things he saw and heard. The originals were all in terrible earnest; let the reader also breathe their spirit, speak their words, and the auctioneer's catalogues and the monotonous prose will be heard no more in our pulpits.

Now we come to the voice, the preacher's most potent and altogether indispensable weapon. It is the channel of communication *par excellence* of soul with soul. Its possibilities are practically limitless. It may express every shade of meaning, every phase of emotion. Winged with enthusiasm and on fire with passion, now of love, now of righteous indignation, it uplifts, excites, moulds, and masters an audience. The orator is an autocrat ruling the surging crowd as cloud-compelling Jove commands the storm or stills the elements.

(All this field is open to the preacher, for religion with which he deals touches every cord of human nature.) To that treasure-house of power and influence his voice is the master key, if he will but learn to use it like a master. Hence, for him, the absolute necessity of vocal training, of patient scientific mastery of those organs of speech wherein lie such hidden power. With an untrained voice, the preacher must fail of his best endeavour. His sword is rusty, his powder damp, his best talent buried in a napkin.

Looking round at vocal artists we see how diligent they are. The voice God has given them they put to usury, shrinking not from the ordeal of years of laborious and expensive discipline in the school of voice production. Yet in the ministry how many men there are who, looking forward to a lifelong exercise of their vocal powers in the chief function

which they will have to discharge, have taken no serious thought whatever, and used no pains worth naming to learn the science and acquire the art of public speaking. With the best natural vocal endowment in the world, it would be a miracle if on these terms a man could step into a pulpit and do himself, his subject, or his audience anything like justice. A good voice deeply concerns the ambassador of Christ. It is an essential part of his equipment which may not be neglected without loss. The law of God operates in this as in every field, and He exacts the full fee of faithful earnest work for the efficiency of every talent He bestows.

One common fallacy I must clear away, and that is that music and the effective tones of speech are closely allied. The truth is that though the same vocal organs are used in their production, the music of song and the music of speech have next to nothing in common. The musician is as often as not a poor speaker, even in the strictly vocal sense, while many a master of the elocutionary art can barely distinguish one tune from another. The sing-song speaker whose regularly recurring cadences on three notes mark him out as a master of soporific oratory is not seldom a musician. In the music of speech, however, there is no diatonic scale, no crescendoes, or diminuendoes; only a subtle adaptation of vocal tones to correspond with and express the thought and feeling of the speaker. These the learner must catch by the ear

and reproduce in practice through his own vocal tubes. I have said his own, for slavish imitation of any vocal mannerisms, be they nasals or gutturals or what they may, spells disaster and usually earns ridicule.

Now just as legibility is the first and last essential of handwriting, so *audibility* is the first and last essential of speech. To acquire that is the first lesson. The secret of audibility is articulation. Many a novice supposes that to be audible speech must be loud. Hence he bellows, raising in many buildings mighty waves of sound, but the walls and roof are alone responsive. As louder and louder ring out the stentorian notes, the sense most surely evaporates or disappears in vocal cadences that signify nothing. What is really required is not loudness at all but articulation. Ellen Terry's stage whisper finds its way to every ear in a vast theatre where shouting would be inaudible; but it is an articulated whisper. Articulation is simply giving birth to every syllable of every word. That does not imply slowness of utterance or schoolmasterly syllabification. It can be done at any speed; but it *must* be done. The vowel of every syllable and its limiting consonants must be faithfully produced. This the novice forgets. He bellows out the head and shoulders of his word, then with a sudden smack, snaps the vertebra and swallows the tail. The same process with tantalising fidelity he applies to

sentences. The patient hearer has only got the subject and the predicate, when down comes the guillotine, and the remainder of the sentence or phrase disappears in an inarticulate gurgle of falling inflection and vocal struggle down the speaker's throat—result, *vox et practeria nihil*.

Speaking of *loudness* I note in passing another fallacy. The novice assumes that emphasis and loudness mean the same thing. Hence the word or phrase that he means to be most emphatic he thunders out at the topmost pitch of his voice. This, however, is just the way not to do it. Emphasis is really produced by contrast, never by mere noise. To drop the voice instead of raising it produces by far the most telling contrast; and in a few, quiet, well-articulated notes, the emphasis desired is secured. The vocal artist, with comparatively little effort and no strain, wins where the bellowing artisan with all his thunder only succeeds in failing.

The next quality of effective speech with which we have to deal is *naturalness*. It is to me a matter of profound surprise that while natural speech is so easy, so sweet, and so telling, and unnatural speech so difficult, so unpleasant, and so ineffective, the latter should be so often preferred by the preacher. Other speakers know better and choose the more excellent way. Now every man has got from Nature his own special vocal machinery. He can cultivate that and develop all its possibilities.

While he does so he is himself, and the most powerful self he can be for all oratorical purposes, but whenever he tries to pass beyond those limits which say "Thus far and no further," he makes himself an echo, and a failure. There are three phases of unnatural speech prevalent among ministers which must be referred to.

(1) There is the strained and unnatural pulpit voice. Many ministers speak well and effectively everywhere but in the pulpit. The moment they reach that eminence their whole tone and style of utterance changes. One hardly recognises that the minister is the same man as spoke ten minutes before so admirably in the vestry. With the pulpit gown is assumed the artificial pulpit speech. The man has parted with his individuality and become a stranger even to himself. Affecting a language which he never uses anywhere else, he forces up at high pressure notes that are not his. He has, in short, ceased to be effective. For a poor fad, he has sacrificed the best vocal notes God has given him. God is faithful, however, and visits the falsetto speaker with the natural penalty—"Minister's sore throat."

(2) There is the imitation, conscious or not, of some prominent speaker; especially if that speaker has a mannerism. I have heard distinguished ministers, some years dead, still vocal in the pulpit of an admirer. An eloquent nasal or

a touch of Irish brogue appear to be the most infectious forms of this disorder, while an Americanism is here and there discernible amid the rhetorical flowers of a born Scotsman. The minister who would remain a man must not degenerate into an echo or an animated gramophone; and let it be added that mimicry of gesture is as infectious to some men, and as obnoxious, as mimicry of speech.

(3) Naturalness of utterance demands the right adjustment of speed and the management of pause. Whether it arises from nervousness or not, certain it is that many young preachers reduce the effect of their sermon to a minimum by running off from the start like a race-horse, as if they were trying to see how many words they could crowd into a minute. What is the result? The machinery of voice production is overworked, and the speaker is pulled up sharply for want of breath just where a sudden and enforced pause breaks the sense. Furthermore, unnatural speed produces inevitably indistinctness and monotony; the important and the less important words and phrases are hopelessly jumbled up together, and worst of all the unconscionable and restless speed of delivery is out of all proportion to the rate of the hearer's receptivity. He, too, is out of breath intellectually, for he has not time to assimilate the sense, and, falling behind in the race, soon abandons effort

and hears nothing but the rattle of a quick-firing gun that hits no mental mark.

In music there are notes of silence; and in natural human speech there are natural pauses which add enormously to the intelligibility, as well as to the impressiveness of what is being spoken and heard. A minister should never be afraid of making at times a long pause between the paragraphs of his discourse, nor should he forget the little effective pause between the nominative and the verb. Now if it be true, and indeed it is, that all true eloquence is inspired by earnestness and quickened by emotion, it is expressly true of religious oratory. The occasion and the audience alike demand it from the preacher. What I have previously said in dealing with the reading of Holy Scripture, that it should bring out all the meaning and all the feeling of the passage, applies with equal force to the delivery of a sermon. The whole tone and spirit must at once be natural and reverential, befitting the importance and solemnity of the theme. Some readers and preachers, doubtless striving to be natural in their tone, only succeed in being secular. What they read and speak might so far as tone is concerned have no significance beyond this world and the things of this world. An article in the leading columns of a newspaper dealing with the incidence of taxation, the unearned increment, or tariff reform would

quite properly be read in this style, but a sermon dealing with the eternal verities, and reaching forth to the things that are unseen and eternal, demands for its delivery a tone, a style, a spirit of an altogether different complexion. That tone and spirit are at once seemly, appropriate, and, in the truest sense, natural. If the preacher is the mouth-piece and messenger of God, and is proclaiming Truth whose transcendent importance has touched, thrilled, and fired his own soul, his genuine expression of all that will be in the highest and manliest sense natural; but it will have no flavour of secularity. The simulation of religious emotion is of all things the most to be condemned. The artificial whine which has somehow or another become associated in the minds of pious men and women with the true type of evangelical preaching and praying is a whine of unreality, a mere note and trick of sanctimoniousness, a device to cover the lack of real genuine human emotion. Honest men and ministers of truth have no dealings with it. Real emotion it cannot express; real emotion will find a nobler and more natural channel through which to make vocal the language of the heart. If "weep here" was ever written, as I hardly believe it was, on the margin of a minister's manuscript by the author, I should advise him to quit at once the pulpit for the stage of melodrama. Natural emotion is of God—its counterfeit in the pulpit is not.

IN THE MAKING

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One point, and a very important point, still remains to be dealt with. (1) Should sermons be written, memorised, and recited? or (2) Should they be read from the manuscript? or (3) Should they be studied and spoken?

There has hardly ever been any serious controversy as to whether or not sermons should be written as a means of preparation. In the elaboration of abstract thought and argument along continuous lines to reasoned conclusions with suitable references and illustrations, not to speak of the selection of the most appropriate language wherewith to clothe an ordered succession of ideas, most men have been greatly helped by the art of writing; and a very large number would confess themselves helpless without the pen. Demosthenes and Cicero worked on these lines. Pen in hand, they elaborated their marvellous orations, dressing the diction with punctilious care. The likelihood is that they were to some extent memorised from the manuscript before delivery. The conditions of ancient oratory, however, were such that the recitation of a memorised speech was out of the question, and the great speeches, as we have them, can only be regarded as full notes in preparation beforehand, supplemented by the orator after delivery.

Sermons, whatever they may be in fact, come under the category of orations, and fall to be prepared and delivered on oratorical lines, while the same

tests of efficiency fall to be applied. The experience of all notable speech-makers supports the view, that the best and most satisfactory preparation is made pen in hand with the audience present in imagination to the mind of the writer, and vividly present. The last condition is essential. The preacher is not writing an essay, a homily, or a thesis. If he were he could dispense entirely with the conscious presence of an audience. In writing a sermon, however, it is wholly otherwise. To give vividness, directness, passion, the preacher must write as he intends to speak, with the audience in full view throughout. Much of the dullness and ineffectiveness of sermons arises solely from this lack of imagination. The writers, occupied with the subject and labouring at the diction, have evidently lapsed into partial or total forgetfulness that an audience is present, to be addressed, instructed, interested, and roused to enthusiasm over the sacred theme. This lapse results in an abstract essay or a monologue of meditation which are good things in their way, but poor substitutes for a sermon.

The sermon written on these lines, what next? To that question there are three answers. (1) Memorise the manuscript and recite it. (2) Take it as it is and read it. (3) Keeping the lines of it in your mind, speak it, clothing the thoughts in the language that comes to you freely extemporised.

I have tried all three, and a record of practical

experience of each may be more useful than any abstract disquisition. *Memorise the manuscript and recite it.* I have known some notable preachers who have adopted this plan. Caird's greatest triumphs were achieved thus. The harvest was good, but not abundant. Even for Caird, one such sermon a month was the measure of output. But this is not good enough for the workaday world where two sermons a week are required. The ministers whom I have personally known as pursuing this plan tore the nervous system prematurely to pieces and are not now alive. I abandoned it early in my ministry, not because memorisation was difficult but for two other reasons. (a) The memorised language came up whenever in a new sermon a kindred theme was touched on. I could not help repeating myself. (b) I felt in a false position. I appeared to be preaching when I was only reciting. The recited sermon is, at best, an imitation, and Brummagem jewellery is not good enough for the pulpit. Therefore, I have no hesitation in advising the young minister not to begin the memorising system, which is wrong in itself, and from day to day impracticable. He can do far better by refusing to hang the memorising mill-stone round his neck, and following truth and nature, by developing other and higher faculties.

The second way of dealing with a written sermon is for a preacher to take it with him, pin it into the

pulpit Bible, and read it. I have also experience of this method, and though I have long since abandoned it for a better, it is still practised in a large number of pulpits. The advantages of this method may be summarised as clearness, continuity, condensation, with a well-calculated time limit. These are doubtless good things, but when counterpoised by the disadvantages, I am afraid they will be found to kick the beam. The reading of sermons, as a general practice, is an innovation. Scottish congregations did not want it, but had to take what they could get. It was, and still is in the main, unpopular, a makeshift for something better. "I see you're at your Bible. What are you at now, John?" said a sermon-reading minister in his pastoral visitation to an old parishioner. "I'm prophesying, sir," replied the old man. "Oh, no, John, you're just reading a prophecy." "Well, sir, if reading a preachin' is preachin', surely readin' a prophecy's prophesying." Scotland has got used to the practice, for the reason that it is felt to be better than an ill-prepared and rambling discourse delivered extempore. So it certainly is; but it has not a few defects, and does not even give security against ill-preparedness and lack of continuity. Moreover (*a*) reading handicaps the preacher in the free and full use of his voice, and thus mortgages one of his best talents. The manuscript is before him on the Bible page. The eyes are incessantly upon it, and the head droops at an

angle of 45° . The vocal cords and the lung space are compressed, while the vocal stream, thus minimised, is directed not to the audience as it should be, but to the manuscript. No singer would attempt singing in that attitude, and no speaker can do his vocal powers justice with his chin on his breast.

(b) The preacher's other actions are necessarily constrained, stiff, awkward, and inexpressive. The eyes, the hands, the face of a speaker are indispensable to his best efforts. They lend meaning and electric influence to his every sentence. Not the lips merely but the whole man must be in the work.

(c) A read sermon, however good, has never the interest and influence of a spoken one. The manuscript more than the man is in the pulpit. It hangs like a screen between the soul of the preacher and the souls of the hearers. The manuscript occupies the foreground, the man behind the manuscript becomes a mechanical performer, and the monotonous unreality of the whole business palls upon the congregation. Is there an advocate at the bar who would dream of addressing a jury with a manuscript? Is there a member of Parliament who would get a hearing on the conditions that a minister imposes on himself? He would make a moving speech in the sense of moving most members into the smoking-room. The congregation thus dealt with does not move, it only becomes listless or falls asleep — mentally at least — mayhap in measure

physically. Few are the men who can read their sermon like a spoken one. It is said that Chalmers was among the exceptions, for, as the old wife said when twitted about her minister reading, "Ay, he reads, but yon's fell readin'." With all these and many other disadvantages that might be stated, reading of sermons cannot be commended. It is a bad method, a bad habit, and more to the purpose, it is unnecessary.

There is a more excellent way. The preacher should get back to nature and speak his sermons. That requires practice, discipline, training, but what good thing does not? Certain I am that almost every minister could do it and do it well, if prepared to pay the usual price of all desirable attainments—determined, steady cultivation of the faculty of speech with which God has endowed him for the highest of all functions—the preaching, in all its fulness and power, of the everlasting Gospel for the salvation of the souls of men.

CHAPTER V

How and What to Preach

IN the last chapter I considered the vocal training and equipment of the preacher, and how these were to be best utilised in preaching. Three methods of dealing with a manuscript sermon were considered. (1) Memorise and recite; (2) Read; (3) Leave the written material of preparation, the fully written sermon or notes of it in the manse, and speak the substance in the pulpit. I dealt with the objections that are urged against 1 and 2, and having strongly commended No. 3, it remained to offer some hints and suggestions as to how it is to be accomplished. To speak fluently, consecutively, and grammatically on any theme, demands three forms of mastery: (a) mastery of the subject, (b) mastery of the language, (c) mastery of oneself. All the objections that have ever been urged against this, unquestionably the best, and indeed the only effective form of delivery, are based on the speaker's failure, more or less complete in one or other or all of these forms of mastery.

As to (a) mastery of the subject, that has to be

achieved whatever form of delivery is chosen. A man who does not know his subject has no right to speak on it at all, or even to read what he writes. Some sermons are written without knowledge just as some are spoken extempore without the necessary study and command of the subject. For this state of things there is no excuse. (No man can preach what he does not know, nor advantageously discuss a theme without adequate preparation; and as methods of preparation depend on the man, no unfailing prescription can be offered.) One man does not feel that he is adequately prepared till he has fully elaborated with the pen. Another prepares equally well by memorising his consecutive thoughts and holding them together for reference, recapitulation, and correction in the form of short notes. A third can clear up all his thinking, utilise his reading, and interject his illustrations by recording them mentally. This last is the best; but while held up as the ideal to be striven after, it must be admitted that the goal is reached only by the outstanding man, and that through a long and exceptional experience. In every case, however, the fact remains that in preparing to preach, a man must, by reading and meditation, get a strong, mental grasp of his theme. He must search diligently among all available sources of reliable information, put these through the mill of criticism, enliven them with concrete illustrations, and finally, get fairly aglow with enthusiasm for his subject.

Then, and not till then, is his sermon prepared and moulded into a complete whole—the grand outlines of the building, mental and spiritual, fully displayed in well-balanced proportion, and all the scaffolding, loose stones, dust and debris used and produced in the process put finally, and for ever, out of sight.

In regard to (b) the ready mastery of language wherewith to clothe the thoughts, Bacon says truly that “conference makes a ready man.” Language, ready and appropriate, is a weapon which must be used often, if it is to be used well; and if one is to become an effective speaker, he must begin early, when the organs of speech are plastic and susceptible. Failing the establishment, which must come, of an adjunct to the Divinity Hall in the form of a well-equipped department of Rhetoric, where, under expert direction and guidance, students shall be trained for an hour daily to speak, to declaim, to bring all their vocal possibilities into shape, students must be content with such a makeshift as their university societies supply. Like many other attainments, public speaking, if practised early and with determination, is not by any means so hard to acquire as many people imagine.

Then there is (c) self-mastery. (No man can do anything so long as he has a haunting sense that he cannot.) The believing Peter walked on the water; the doubting Peter sank. Lack of confidence will N.B.

make the most competent speaker stumble, hesitate, collapse. "Stage fright" has paralysed and struck dumb many a good actor. "House of Commons fright" at first overcame such a master of rhetoric, invective, and dialectic, as Benjamin Disraeli; and many another orator has felt at first its blighting influence. "General Assembly fright" has left many a debate poor that might have been rich; and "pulpit fright" has played like havoc with church services.

(Like the "demon octypus," this last terror claims its victims by the score, promising and sensitive young ministers being its favourite prey.) How are they to be delivered? The wise and ancient counsel is still available for such as will accept it. Believe that you can do a thing, and you will. How is this confidence to be acquired? I will freely offer, without a royalty, one way by which the thing can be done. The discovery is probably not original, but all are heartily welcome to the use of it till it be protected by "letters patent."

N.B.,
I had written and read my sermons for ten years—two weekly—when, as it chanced, an occasion came which prevented my finishing the writing of my second sermon. As I never used an old sermon, I had to do my best with the unfinished one. Knowing what I had to say I ventured to finish it extempore. I succeeded. That success was a lesson. The experiment was repeated with half the sermon unwritten. Then finding I could think on

my feet as well as at the desk, and find at the moment the language required, I wrote an introduction only, with notes of the headings. This at length was found unnecessary, and for the last five-and-twenty years or more I have preached twice every Sunday without "the paper." Note, however, that this never meant in any degree relaxation of effort in any of the departments of preparation. Full of the subject, and with an orderly outline clearly apprehended, supplemented by reading and illustration, I found the work of preaching increasingly pleasant, and, I believe, effective. There is hardly a minister who will fail in this matter, if he make determined resolution to succeed.

Complaints are freely made that the pulpit is losing its influence, that sermons are becoming more colourless, conventional, and uninteresting than they were. Hence, church attendance, especially in the cities, is declining; and to stem the exodus, more ritual, more music, more showy and elaborate forms of service are being introduced. With these I shall deal later on. (Meanwhile, let me say, as frankly and emphatically as I can, that no such elaborations can be a substitute for power in the pulpit, or save our congregations from depletion.)

N.B. We need more efficiency in the pulpit. (We need preachers who are better trained in the art of oratory, so that the spiritual wants of the people may be fully met.)

N.D. The spoken sermon falls, expressly as the recited or read sermon does not, into the category of orations. The preacher becomes a speaker, and requires to be equipped with all the helps and accessories of the rhetorician's art. Oratory has been defined as the science and art of persuasion. (The orator's first object is to bring his audience to his own point of view.) But his real goal is to move his hearers to action, and get them to translate the ideas and opinions of the Truth of which he has persuaded them into practice. To that end all the orator's art is directed. The orator-preacher has exactly the same end in view. But to move men is a hard task. It has to be scientifically done. It requires a knowledge of human nature; and, knowing the springs of action that move men, the orator-preacher applies his art accordingly. There is no deeper science, and no finer art.

N.B. The orator has to deal, it may be, with men opposed more or less determinedly to his views, or with men inspired by prejudice, blinded by ignorance, or totally indifferent to the matter that has fired his soul and is burning on his lips. He must get near these men, sympathetically near. He must put himself in their place, become one of them, gain their confidence by reminding them calmly of things they and he hold in common. He must humble himself, disavow, in manner at least, all authority over them. His opening words should be

those of apology rather than of dictation. Mark Antony knew his business.

"I come not, friends, to steal away your hearts :
I am no orator as Brutus is ;
But, as you know me all, ■ plain blunt man,
That love my friend ; . . .
For I have neither wit, nor words, nor worth,
Action, nor utterance, nor the power of speech,
To stir men's blood : I only speak right on ;
I tell you that which you yourselves do know ;
Show you sweet Cæsar's wounds, poor, poor dumb mouths,
And bid them speak for me."

(Confidence established, even the opposed hearer listens, while the indifferent has his curiosity awakened, and as interest grows he eagerly follows the argument, and anticipates the issue.) The arguments having been marshalled, the insinuating apologist grows bolder, and driven on by the passion his theme engenders, the audience catch the fire of his enthusiasm, and in ■ brilliant peroration, the orator moves them at his will.

Much of this applies to pulpit oratory. If the preacher has not the avowedly opposed to deal with, he has the lukewarm, the callous, the indifferent. These are to be influenced by no threats, and all assumption of superiority or authority would defeat itself, for it would simply be resented. The preacher must take the winning way, the line of least resistance. He must begin with a gentle

persuasiveness, obtain the hearer's confidence, and, speaking the truth in love, win his way through the emotions to the heart, to the will, to the centre of moral and spiritual initiative. (Once the man is moved, the victory of Christ over his soul has begun.) Let the preacher not despise the rhetorician's art. It is a potent instrument in the mouth of God's messenger. It is the key which opens wide the door for the Christ to come in with His light, His love, His feast of high communion. (Nor should it be forgotten, for this lies at the centre of it all, that as the one conquering secret of Christ is love, so out of the true preacher's Christ-begotten love for the souls with whom he deals, flows that spirit-power which quickens and converts.) For that true Christ-love there can be no substitute, nor can it be artificially assumed or successfully simulated. It is the breath of the oratory of the heart, and without it all histrionic posturing is vain. (The preacher must be sincere and earnest first, aglow with holy fire, and if this be supplemented by the orator's art, he will be irresistible.) A sermon preached on these lines cannot fail in directness, definiteness, intelligibility, suggestiveness. A word on each of these.

Directness. Some ministers have been approvingly described as comprehensive preachers, meaning by this that they do not strike any particular class

or individual. Their sermons have an element of spaciousness about them. They move majestically along in vague generalities, having no direct bearing upon any doctrine or individual. They never come to close quarters. They are like the discharge of a blank cartridge-battery—very noisy, but quite harmless. Now a sermon that is not directed deliberately to do some specific good had better not be preached. If it is to do good, it must have its aim. (Ministers are not ordained to preach generalities, but to preach Christ and Christianity to a congregation of living men and women whom they know, and the better they know them, the better will their sermon be.) When the Evangelist got up into the chariot of the Ethiopian eunuch he did not expatiate at large on Christianity. He did better. “He preached Christ *unto* him.” He knew what he was speaking about and who he was speaking to, so he struck home and won. All the generalities in the philosophy of Christianity would have had no effect. What was aimed at was one message fitted for one man—“Here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptised?” This was the result. It is the minister’s duty to preach Christ *unto* his people, not at them. (He must be a spiritual expert like St. Paul—plastic, versatile.) “All things to all men that he may by any means gain some.” Therefore, he must set forth not a nebula nor an abstrac-

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tion, but some definite thing directly bearing on the congregation or class that he wishes, for Christ's sake, to influence.

Akin to the quality of directness, yet differing from it, is that of *definiteness*. It has been said, and in a sense truly, that religious doctrines and ideas do not admit of the same preciseness of expression as scientific and mathematical truths. The Holy Trinity, *e.g.*, does not indeed admit of definition as a triangle does, nor do the methods of deductive and inductive logic apply to the eternal verities of religion as they do to the posited principles and conditions of experimental or mathematical science. Yet it is clear that definition and the ratiocinative method are, so far from being excluded, of signal service and legitimate applicability in almost all departments of religious thought. The definition of Faith as "the evidence of things not seen" is as good and workable as that of an Asymptote, for both involve appreciation of an intangible, indefinable entity. The great facts and principles of religion may be reasoned and argued about with the same advantage as the doctrines of Constitutional Law and the facts and principles of secular history.

What I mean by a preacher being definite is that he has a system of religious thought to explain, illustrate, and press for the acceptance and instruction of his hearers. The preacher is not beating

the air, or treading a path through a labyrinth of uncertainties. He knows Whom he has believed, what he has accepted as God's message to his own soul, and he should have no difficulty in making that faith and that message clear to the minds and hearts of his hearers. A picture of anything is a picture of nothing, and a sermon upon anything and everything is futile. "Well," said a distinguished Edinburgh minister once to a distinguished editor of the *Scotsman* as they sauntered homewards from the morning service, "what did you think of our young professor?" "Oh," said the editor, "out for an airing, but not going anywhere." (If the preacher is like a horse in the ring out to show his paces and not going anywhere, he can only lead his audience round the ring.) To be definite, the preacher must have a distinct conception of what he is aiming at and how best to reach the mark. He must remember that he is not entitled to ask his audience to take tickets with him in an excursion train to Nowhere. There must be no doubt about his destination. In his sermon, he must keep it in full view. If he have a lively imagination, he must take good care not to introduce an illustration for its own sake, or allow the illustration to beguile him into a by-path. Illustration is only good when it makes the subject clearer. The man with the telescope sees the star as it swims into his ken, and he keeps his eye upon it. The man with the kaleidoscope sees no star but many clusters of stars, very

beautiful no doubt, but teaching nothing. Preachers ought not to let their illustrations hide the star of Truth, the definite point which it is their business to make sharp and clear to their auditors. Everything must be strictly subordinated to this end.

Finally, definiteness must not be confused with dogmatism. A dogma is a statement founded on authority, and the name is usually applied to statements founded on an authority which does not recognise reason as dictator. All sciences, including that of religion, have their dogmas, and most of the scientists I have known could be placed in the category of pronounced dogmatists. To be definite is not to be dogmatic. One must be definite whether dealing with dogma or fact, otherwise there is danger of being placed in the category to which the old lady consigned her agent when she described him as "a good sort of a good-for-nothing-kind-of-a-body."

The next essential quality of a sermon is that of *intelligibility*. St. Paul is an authority here. "Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding that by my voice I might teach others also than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." Much of the language employed in academic institutions is an unknown tongue to an ordinary congregation. To continue to use it is "bad form." The preacher should aim at the simplest language without seeming to speak down to any class

of hearers. The most illiterate will feel and resent all clumsy condescension. Natural and intelligent speech is what is required; and the English tongue has no rival for directness and simplicity. Meta-physical terms and abstract ideas must be avoided, likewise all endeavour to pack one's thought into the smallest possible space. Condensation is good for a thoughtful reader, but it is useless for the average hearer. If the preacher would only remember that it has taken him half an hour or more to compress all his thoughts into a short paragraph, he would not be surprised at finding that the much condensed paragraph has gone clean over the heads of almost all his hearers. The analytic and receptive power of the hearer is strictly limited, and it must first of all be gauged, then accommodated.

In preaching, it is abstract ideas that are most to the front. Faith, Hope, Charity, Justification, Atonement, Righteousness, are all abstract terms. Now, do what the preacher will and be he as earnest as he may, he will fail to maintain attention long in a world of abstractions. It is necessary for him, therefore, to be ever busy embodying his abstractions in concrete forms. To be interesting, he must "give the airy somethings a local habitation and a name." He must illustrate. An ounce of the concrete is not only worth a ton of abstractions, but, like radium in a mass of material, it quickens, lightens, and uplifts it. An illustration, if it be a good one, will remain in

the minds of hearers long after all the arguments and divisions, and even the text itself, have been forgotten. With abstract ideas the preacher is working in a dark chamber by the candle light of philosophy. He must open the shutters and let in the sunlight of concrete reality. Then only will the abstract argument stand out clear. To be intelligible, it is not necessary to be conversational. The preacher should not try to engage his hearer in a "confidential crack"; and unless he be a genius he should avoid anecdote.

The last quality of a sermon, to which I would call attention, is suggestiveness. The distinctive mark of all artistic work is not elaboration or photographic exactness. It is suggestiveness. As with a photograph, so with a sermon if it takes a text, analyses it, uses it all up, leaving nothing more to be said. Now if a preacher think it his duty to do all the thinking and leave nothing for his hearers to do, he has not fathomed the secret of preaching. He is not in the pulpit to be thinking proxy for his hearers. He is there to stimulate thinking and all that follows in the minds and hearts and lives of his hearers. If he merely macadamise or grind his text or theme to powder, leaving nothing to be supplied, nothing to be done, he is a failure. The true quarrier in pulpit work will throw out big masses of rock for his hearers to grind down as they may. That sermon only is living which is suggestive. A

preacher has only succeeded when he has set a vision before his hearers which they feel they must realise.

(A sermon must be above all else a living thing, a vital unity. It can neither be made by the yard nor measured by the clock.) It may be too long, though its delivery has only occupied fifteen minutes. When the vital throb of a sermon ceases, it is futile to continue. If it have no vital throb it should not be preached. A sermon is never too long if it be alive from start to finish, but if the hearers become listless, it is a sure sign that the sermon has lost its vitality. In such a situation the closure should be applied promptly.

In the old days, a sermon was usually analytical. It had its heads or divisions marked and numbered, and it moved slowly along to fifthly and lastly, or even to a larger ordinal. This method, though perhaps useful for memorising purposes, is mechanical and tedious. Consequently, it has been largely abandoned. As there seemed no limit to their elaboration, such hand-saw-and-pivot sermons suggested to even the most patient hearer the possibility of there having no end. Ministers no longer try to put all the theology they know, nor an epitome of the whole Bible, into every sermon. They are content, and congregations approve, of less comprehensive and ambitious efforts. "But one dish is needful," as the Lord said to Martha, and with one

aspect of divine Truth for one diet of service, modern congregations are amply satisfied.

Now I come to the crucial question, What is a minister to preach? or, to put it another way, What is the supreme function of the pulpit? I will best reach the positive answer by getting rid first of a few of the negatives.

N.B. (1.) Incidental reference has already been made to the fact that a minister as such may not, and cannot afford to be, a politician. Politics, national or local, he must eschew. Strong as may be his personal opinions on unemployment, the incidence of taxation, free imports, and other subjects which excite party passion, he is not entitled as a preacher to applaud or denounce ministries, policies, or parties in the State. He stands for righteousness and peace. He represents no party, and, save where national morality is concerned, may not intervene without mortgaging his influence and position as a minister of religion and an ambassador of Christ.

(2.) Ecclesiastical controversy which touches none of the verities of religion is in the same category, and the minister as preacher will be well advised to leave it severely alone.

(3.) Controversial doctrine is not in the main to edification. The weakness of the Scottish mind lies in manifold disputings; and the type of sermon that was prevalent during the middle half of the nineteenth century strongly reflected this feature of the

national character. The disputants may have achieved famous victories, but what they contended about nobody nowadays stays a moment to inquire. The unintelligible echoes of their watch-cries are all that is left of the doctrinal controversies that once raged so fiercely. Election, Free Grace, a Limited or Unlimited Atonement, Spiritual Independence, Erastianism, Arminianism, Calvinism, *et hoc genus omne*, have had their day. They hardly affect the minister's message to-day. The gospel of the grace of God in Jesus Christ remains unaffected, and it is the preacher's duty and privilege to proclaim it without controversy. The gospel of Christ is broader, higher, and deeper than all the creeds and all the sects. It is supreme in a region where sectarian strife and creed contention find no place. N. B.

Should, however, apologetic instruction appear necessary or desirable, special meetings and classes can readily be organised, but not in the church itself. The sacred edifice is no place for disputation. A congregation may not be transformed into a debating club without detriment to its highest interests. The church is the meeting-place of believers for devout meditation, common prayer, and praise, and the edifying of the body of Christ. For these purposes and for these alone may it be conserved. Second.

The Christianity of Christ is the preacher's domain and his inexhaustible theme. He will learn it best

at first hand from His own lips in the Gospels where, reverently sitting in spirit at His feet, he will hear the Divine message that is able to make men wise unto eternal life.) There, too, the character of Christ will be revealed—His purity, His heavenly-mindedness, His matchless love, His oneness with the Father. There will be disclosed the entrancing vision of His beauty, the value of the human soul, the steps by which from the bondage of sin we may ascend into the life of holiness, and breathe the air of the one Heaven that we can ever know and where Jesus ever lived—the heaven of doing God's will. (The preacher shall interpret, under the guidance of His Spirit, the spiritual teaching of His Gospel which has disclosed an ideal of duty and of life that has abolished sin and death, and lifted the human soul into the loving presence and consecrated service of the Highest.) There we come into living contact with a personal Saviour and accept Him as our very own. There, in the holy calm of sin forgiven, faith anchored in the eternal, hope and joy unspeakable, we learn to live the Christianity of Christ, and are fitted by His grace to be His messengers, apostles, and living epistles to the souls of others. This Christly atmosphere is the true Divinity hall, without experience of which no man, however learned in all the theologies and philosophies of the world, is competent or called to occupy a pulpit. To create this atmosphere in his congregation, and this living contact between the

souls of his hearers and the holy soul of Christ, is the one great function of the preacher. (The sense of that will teach him what to preach and how to preach—by pulpit sermons, surely, but above all, by the daily sermon of his own character and life.)

With this fully in view, the philosophies of Christianity will stand in their right place, always behind and merely supplementary to the teaching of the Master. No philosophy of Christianity, Apostolic or otherwise, from Saint Paul onwards, may usurp the place of Christ's Gospel. These but illustrate the Evangel by explanation and enforcement; they cannot supersede or compete with it. It is not Paul or Peter or John or Augustine or Calvin or anyone else that the minister is called to preach. These were but scholars in Christ's school, knowing and prophesying in part, and never professing to have a gospel of their own. They must therefore recede into the background. In the great firmament of religion there is but one sun. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, theologians are but moons reflecting with partial ray the glory of His light. (Preach Christ, not philosophies, nor theories, nor creeds, nor systems of belief, nor controversies of any kind. If Christ be preached, the pulpit will be full of light.)

I shall now give a few hints on preaching to special classes of people, and on special themes and occasions.

(1.) No essential distinction should be made

between a rich man's sermon and a poor man's, nor between that preached to a west end congregation and that preached to an east end one. We are all sinners; and the cultured sinner is as much in need of a Saviour as the dock labourer. The substance of the preacher's message must be the same to all, and if there be any discrimination between east and west it must be in favour of the former, for the Gospel is to the poor. As to style and manner, these are adaptable things. The preacher must judge how best the truth will reach the people to whom he is sent. It is fatal to rush upon obstacles, or rouse prejudices. The style, and language, and references should be suitable to the men and women to be reached *in modo suaviter, in re fortiter* that the ministry be not blamed.

In preaching special sermons to young men and women, the minister will rarely find it advantageous to hold separate services for each sex. Such addresses had best be given in the Church hall. But I deprecate the splitting up of the congregation into sections. Such procedure seems to imply that there are separate interests to be served, or that things may be said to men or to women by themselves which could not be appropriately said in each other's hearing. There are no such matters, nor are there any things that ought to be dealt with in the pulpit, which are undesirable for young men and women to hear together in the house of God. Rather

is their presence together to be encouraged ; it is natural and right, and, for all the highest ends and purposes, will be found the more effective. The duties of men on the lines of morality, culture, and, if you will, gallantry, may surely, with no breach of good taste and with a higher accentuation, be dealt with in the presence of their wives, sisters, and sweethearts, than in the artificial atmosphere of segregation. The same applies with equal force on the other side, where the Christian duties, responsibilities, and influence of womanhood are expressly explained and insisted on. The church is a family—not an aggregation of clubs and societies.

And here there opens for our consideration a most important department of the minister's work as a preacher. I refer to the children's sermon. While to many ministers preaching to children presents greater difficulties than any other, it need hardly be pointed out that it is necessary. There are ministers who could preach a sermon to an academic audience with the greatest ease and acceptance who would yet be incompetent to preach to a gathering of Sunday School scholars. Yet this latter piece of work is admittedly not a whit less valuable than the former. Nay, preaching to children demands the exercise of gifts, and the use of methods in all respects different to, and in no respect less exacting than those required in preaching to university students. Moreover, the effect of a children's sermon, its real incidence on

character and life, may be infinitely greater than the academic sermon. "When I was a child," says St. Paul, "I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child, but," he adds, and here the difficulty arises, "when I became a man I put away childish things." It is indeed difficult to understand the child-mind. St. Paul probably never tried it, and, versatile as he was in mood and sympathy, would probably have found it more difficult to preach in infant wonderland than to argue at Athens. Yet that road the preacher to children must find, and that strange world of dreams and half developed ideas he must try to understand. His success in doing so will be the measure of his success in preaching. If he fail utterly in the one, he will make nothing of the other, for he will speak of unknowable things in an unknown tongue. (He must know children who would preach to them or to their elders aright, and so far from putting away childish things, the preacher must be interested in them, and be a child so far as his limits of adaptability will permit.)

Yet this condescension must be skilfully done. The preacher must not let it appear that he is stooping to the child from a great height. Children quickly discover clumsy condescension and resent it. The preacher's language must be simple—with the simplicity of friendly naturalness. He must speak of such things as a child can understand and feel interested about. He must be concrete, pic-

torial, leading on gently from thought to thought along a path of pictures lighted by imagery and full of healthful joyousness.

Now he might naturally expect help in this difficult task from the accompaniments and associations of religion as it appeals to the child-mind. On the contrary, his most necessary duty is to remove those morbid impressions and false ideas about religion that have been thoughtlessly and foolishly inflicted upon the little ones. Nothing more unchildlike, more inherently false and injurious than the sentiments expressed in the majority of Sunday School hymns could well be conceived. A child palpitating with health and gladness, keenly responsive to all that is beautiful and true is called upon to express its feelings in objectionable hymns like these :—

“ I’m but a stranger here,
Heaven is my home ;
Earth is a desert drear,” &c.

“ Childhood’s years are passing o’er us,
Youthful days will soon be done,
Cares and sorrows lie before us,
Hidden dangers, snares unknown.”

“ Here we suffer grief and pain.”

“ There is a happy land,
Far, far away.
Come to this happy land,
Come, come away ;
Why will ye doubting stand ?
Why still delay ?”

“I love to think of the heavenly land,
That promised land so fair,
Oh, how my raptured spirit longs
To be for ever there !”

“Within the churchyard side by side,
Are many long low graves.”

“There’s a rest for little children
Above the bright blue sky.”

There are nearly a hundred hymns in the Church of Scotland collection for children, and the great majority of them are tainted by this unreality. The children are taught to say and sing that they are tired of this weary world, and are longing to get away to Heaven as soon as possible. They who teach children to sing a lie entail on their souls an enormous responsibility ; and the doom pronounced by the Master on “such as offend one of these little ones ” was not pronounced lightly. Who shall deliver the children from this debasing hypocrisy ? He who could supply even a few healthy, true, and child-like hymns would be conferring on the rising generation a blessing in richness beyond all computation. Such an one would be making the children and the Church his debtor for ever. Meanwhile in preaching to children, the minister should make earnest effort to banish the false and the morbid, and to lead the little ones here and now to the heaven of doing right, of speaking

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the truth, of loving their parents, teachers, and one another. This heaven is not "far, far away."

Sermons to the young may be fraught with lifelong influence for good. The preacher's opportunity is great, and only to be truly met by utilising all the bright, beautiful, and inspiring thoughts and things he knows. If the preacher wins the confidence of the children and their love, a share of that heaven of innocent delight where the children dwell will surely also be his.

CHAPTER VI

Praise—Prayer—Sacraments

THE first day of the week, the Lord's Day, as it came to be called in the Early Church, is only connected with Judaism and the Decalogue by the slenderest of ties. It is like the Jewish Sabbath, a weekly commemoration day, not of the Divine rest after the work of a world's creation, but of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave. It is not the outcome of a divine behest or institution of law, for Christianity knows nothing of holy days and specified seasons. The Lord's Day was never regarded as a substitute for, or an improvement upon, the Jewish Sabbath. It sprang from Christian hearts o'erflowing with gratitude to God and holy joy over the victory achieved by the risen Redeemer—a victory which opened for all believers henceforth the gates of immortality. Hence, being in this spirit on Resurrection Day, Christians enter into the courts of God with common thanksgiving, and into His gates with praise. Not to obey any religious injunction do they

assemble, but freely to satisfy a human emotion, and obey, with willing hearts, a divine impulse.

Praise then forms a natural and necessary part of the Christian service. Music lends wings to gladness, and as the holy hymn or psalm ascends from grateful hearts and voices attuned to the praise of God, the congregation is together uplifted into the atmosphere of worship. In Scottish Churches the day of prejudice that forbade the aid of instrumental music in the service of praise is happily past. (No music can be too grand for the service of God. Let it therefore be the best that money and musical education can supply. But let it always be remembered that congregational praise, hearty, full-toned, and participated in by all, is the end in view.) Organs and choirs exist not for themselves, far less as substitutes for the choral worship of the whole people. They must therefore be directed and subordinated to that end. Now, where there is little or no congregational practice in singing, there is never lacking the danger that a highly-trained, and, it may be, highly-paid choir, under the guidance of a zealous choirmaster and organist, may get musically so far ahead of the rank and file of the worshippers that it ceases to be a help, and may even become a hindrance to congregational praise. The organ plays, the choir sings splendidly, but perforce the congregation is dumb. They cannot attain to such complicated praise, and therefore cease to try.

Now in order that every worshipper may participate in the praise, the minister must exercise a controlling influence; and he must do this wisely. The choirmaster and organist must be conciliated, the choir encouraged; but their contributions to the service must be kept within the limits of congregational praise. Just as the captain of a Cunard steamship does not interfere in the detail operations of the engine-room, but, all the same, controls absolutely the course of the ship, so must the wise minister rule. He knows quite well that a choir cannot in these days be kept together with the restricted programme of Scottish Psalm tunes and an occasional hymn tune to practise. He also knows that there is a musical plane which the choir desire to reach, and which is far above the capabilities of the congregation. Compromise, therefore, is absolutely necessary, and the minister must be the intermediary. The anthem is always available for the more musical people, and there are voluntaries and chants for the organ. These should suffice if it is made clear that the choir's function is not to give a musical exhibition, but to give helpful assistance to the congregation in the praise portion of the service.

For many years in Scotland the metrical version of the Psalms was the only book of praise. Later on came the Paraphrases, and, later still, the Hymnal, the Anthem book, prose Psalm chants, Doxologies, &c. The quantity is large; the quality

such as to demand of the minister the exercise of all his powers of discrimination.

The Sacred Psalter is a collection of Jewish, personal, and national songs or hymns dating from David down to the Maccabees. It is a unique collection, but all are not equally useful in the services of the Christian Church. Some ministers have sung them straight through, just as some have read the Scriptures from beginning to end. Both are equally to be discountenanced by the Christian minister, whose selection is to be made not with the aid of the scissors and the calendar, but by the exercise of his spiritual faculties—hearing in the inner ear what God is saying to-day to his listening soul, and seeing in the light transmitted from the past the beautiful things of God. In this spirit of reverent discrimination, he examines the metrical version of the Psalms and selects a psalter of his own, say forty or fifty sections of Psalms most suitable for Christian service, and marks these for use. To these the time-hallowed tunes should be permanently attached. Brand new tunes lack the associations that make Kilmarnock and Dunfermline dear to the Presbyterian worshipper. The same faculty of spiritual discrimination should be applied to the Paraphrases and the mixed multitude of Hymns authorised for divine service. The wheat must be separated from the chaff. Hymns containing maudlin sentiment, bad theology, and bad taste, and they are legion, should be rigorously

eliminated. This done, an ample store will be left for the expression of every phase of Christian feeling. The Psalms and Hymns must be selected like the Scriptural lessons for the day, so that with the sermon they may constitute a spiritual unity.

Then there is the subject of public prayer—a great subject that requires to be earnestly considered, and handled with common-sense and Christian tenderness. The consideration is first of all an historical one. It was natural that the Early Church should cherish the prayerful ejaculations of the martyrs and the more deliberate prayers of saintly men, who laboured and suffered for Christ. These expressions were a spiritual heritage, and formed a treasury of devotion. Then as Church services became regularised, the manual of devotion came into being, blossoming out into an authorised service-book, and, finally, into an elaborate liturgy. Liturgical services became practically universal over the Church, modified from country to country and from age to age, so that we have preserved to us quite a library of ecclesiastical devotion, worthy of study as casting light on the religious ideas and general development of the Church.

The stereotyping of doctrines by their embodiment in authorised liturgies and fixed formal services was one among many inevitable results. A liturgy persists long after its language has ceased to express the Church's living thought, and becomes in the course of the centuries nothing more than a fossilised

reminiscence. For while the Church has ceased to think, believe, or express itself in that way, the liturgy acts as the dead hand of authority retarding always and, often actually barring, the movement of Christian thought. The result is a mechanical service in which the mind of the worshipper ceases to acquiesce—a service to which his heart and soul give no response. All liturgies, ancient, mediæval, or semi-modern, fall of necessity under this condemnation. Their habitual use closes the avenues of the soul to the free ingress of the inspiring spirit of God. Prayers are read, intoned, sung, but these are neither in matter nor form the prayers of the longing worshipper who, debarred from expressing his devotion in his own way, is offered a mechanical access to communion with God in the form of a liturgical staircase built by pious men centuries ago. Moreover, the faculty of free and spontaneous prayer, for lack of exercise by minister and people alike, becomes paralysed.

This was undoubtedly the condition of things when the Reformation took place, otherwise would service books have been discarded by the Reformers as were the other accessories of the Roman worship. Purged, translated, and recast to reflect the new opinions, they were retained and used in most, if not all, of the Reformed Churches. In this matter the Lutheran, as was to be expected, was the most conservative. In 1523, Luther prepared an Order

of Service for the Congregation, and three years later, the German Mass. The vernacular was substituted for the Latin, but the main lines of the Roman Missal were closely followed. From this, the Genevan Book of Service differed more widely, and in 1554 John Knox drew up an Order of Liturgy on similar lines for the use of his Frankfort congregation. This Liturgy was adopted by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1560, and was the authorised form of service till 1645, when the Directory of Public Worship took its place. Things had probably remained thus had not the persistent attempts of the Stuart kings to foist Episcopacy and its Liturgy upon Scotland produced in the Scottish mind a strong distaste for, and a strong prejudice against, all liturgical services as savouring at least of prelacy, if not of something worse. Hence it is that from that day to this, the Scottish Church has had no authorised forms of prayer or service; and the prejudice against such forms, though certainly somewhat abated during the past thirty years, still exists as a factor to be reckoned with in Scottish ecclesiastical life. This prejudice notwithstanding, it may be well to consider, in a calm and philosophic spirit, the relative advantages of liturgical and free prayer. The advantages of liturgical prayer are said to be these :—

- (1.) It is more condensed, definite, and orderly.

(2.) The language is more chaste and devotional.

(3.) The worshippers know from the prayer-book in their hands what is being prayed for, and are able audibly to respond.

To the *first* of these three considerations a ready answer may be given. Prayer should not be offered in condensed language that bears the stamp of artificial and laboured pressure. Its prime virtue is simplicity, and if the worshipper must struggle to grasp the meaning of condensed language and make mental analysis of hard passages, he must perforce leave for the time being the realm of prayer. This applies to all prayers couched in archaic phraseology that need translation into or assimilation to the modes of living thought and expression. Prayer in a language that is dead is no vehicle for a living soul in its access to God.

Then as to definiteness. All true prayer is definite in its requests; but a deliberately detailed catalogue of items belongs not to the realm of true devotion. Amid a multiplicity of items however definite, the living contact of the soul with God is in danger of being broken. There is a limit to particulars, and a man can only desire intensely, and ask in prayerful earnestness, one thing at a time.

As to orderliness, there is no reason why a well-considered extempore prayer should in this respect fall short of the highest standards of liturgical devotion. The advocate of printed prayers, how-

ever, has here a right to be heard not on the merits of such prayers on the score of continuity, but on the demerits of such extempore prayers as are lacking in that essential quality. There is nothing more distressing or destructive of devotional feeling in a congregation than what may be called a hotch-potch prayer, without beginning, middle, or end. Such prayers provide in our day among educated men the one strong argument for a liturgy. But there is no reason why this argument should exist, for there is no excuse for such disorderliness. What has to be attended to by the minister is the extent and method of his preparation. Nor need there even be room for saying that a printed liturgy is better than a minister's own liturgy compiled by himself, and, it may be, recited with as much verbal sameness from day to day as if it were in stereotype. There is no excuse save laziness for such prayers. Let the minister keep his mind and soul in living contact with the best thought and feeling of his time, in contact, too, with the living God and with the ever varying needs of his people, and there will be no complaint or possibility of iteration.

The second point on which a liturgy is usually commended is that its language is more chaste and devotional than that of extempore prayer. It need not be so till at least the wells of devotion be dry. In the literature of devotion we find oft and again

expressions of supreme chasteness, dignity, and felicity, but of these qualities the liturgies have no monopoly. We are not dependent on ancient ecclesiastical sources through which to gain the most chaste, dignified, felicitous expression of our devotional thought and feeling. The whole range of devotional expression, of which the liturgies absorbed mere fragments, is open to the man who is preparing for the exercise of free prayer; and he is assuredly as near the fountain-head of inspiration as was St. Ambrose, Augustine, or Chrysostom.

The third advantage claimed for read prayers is that the worshippers know from the prayer-book in their hands what things are being prayed for, and are therefore able to follow and respond, engaging audibly in the public service of God. This is without question a great advantage to the congregation in the case of a service of prayer whose scope and order are strange to them, and notably in the case of a chaotic prayer whose limits, if it has any, are indeterminate. When a well-prepared minister conducts the prayers of his people, there is no difficulty in their following and inwardly responding. The Presbyterian by habit and disposition desires and requires no more. His racial reticence makes him averse to responses; and there is absolutely no need for any minister trying to evoke them. The experiment has been often made, and the results all over the Church are the same. The Presbyterian will

not make his public devotion audible, not even to the extent of adding an audible "Amen" to the public prayer.

A liturgy with responses has been peristently offered him, but he will not have it. Responses and chanted prayers have been composed for his edification, and sung by a trained choir, but all to no purpose. The tide still runs strong against the practice, and for any minister to attempt to get rid of it even with the best intentions, is to court failure. What remains for him is to be simple, orderly, connected, devout.

Public prayer at its best, is subdivisible into certain distinct actions or parts. The morning prayer may consist of :—

Adoration—the highest, finest, most reverential language being used.

Thanksgiving for temporal blessings, for God's Providence, joy, sorrow, the holy discipline of life, for freedom and opportunity to learn and obey His holy will ; for the gift of Christ, as Example, Revealer, Mediator, for the Holy Ghost, for the means of grace and the hope of glory.

Confession. There is nothing better than that in the English Prayer-Book.

Invocation of the Holy Ghost to upbuild, restore, inspire, and to sanctify His people and bless them in and through the service. The Lord's Prayer should never be tagged on to another prayer, nor should it ever be chanted. It should stand alone, either as

the opening prayer of the service, where I usually place it, or instead of a collect.

The intercessory prayer though unread, may be in many of its parts practically liturgical. Prayers for the poor, the sick, the sorrowful, the bereaved, the tempted, the dying, the young, the middle-aged, the old, the master, the servant, the Church Universal, and its various communions, missions at home and abroad, church-workers, the particular parish and congregation, the King and Queen, the Royal family, legislators, judges, magistrates, ministers of religion, teachers of youth, the homes, the families, the Commonwealth, the Army and Navy, peace and prosperity, and the like may vary but little, though the mechanical tone of formalism should be studiously avoided. Elasticity and felicity will save the minister from degenerating into a praying machine, and will sustain the devout attention of the worshippers much more effectually than if they had a printed liturgy.

Here I am led to note a few of the defects of liturgical or read prayers. They lack spontaneity and the essential note of personal earnestness. Just as the slavishly followed manuscript of a sermon interposes a screen or barrier between the preacher and the hearer, so does the prayer-book produce the impression that the operator may not be in living conscious contact with the spirit of God. The utterance of printed prayer seems but the echo of somebody else's devotions. It has a mechanical note,

a lack of earnestness and personality. There is a coldness, a stiffness, in fixed and formal phraseology which does not belong to spontaneous devotion, and so fails to thrill and uplift the heart. To this must be added the deadening effect of iteration on the congregation whose responses tend to become mechanical through long usage, and the undoubted and inevitable decay both in minister and people of the faculty of prayer which they are never called upon to exercise with their own heart and mind. By constantly leaning on a crutch, a man becomes a cripple.

These undoubted defects of public liturgical prayer are found accentuated when this form of devotion is used on special occasions such as sickness, sorrow, calamity, bereavement, or the burial of the beloved dead, where words and forms avail little and the personal note of sympathy and accommodation to the special and individual case is all in all. Book forms of devotion at the bedside of the dying are grotesquely out of place. An office for the Visitation of the Sick can never be more than a clumsy and haphazard attempt to accomplish an impossibility. Take the Church of England office, and note the small number of cases to which it could be applied with any sense of suitability. If ever there was an urgent call, an imperative necessity for free prayer delicately adapted to an individual case, that call and necessity is at the bedside of the dying. Sympathy, consideration, tact, all the best qualities of a living minister, are

demanded there, and no words of a dead book can take his place. Moreover, the thought of being tied to a book, and of being helpless without it, can hardly fail to impress the minister himself with a crushing sense of his own incompetence. Note, too, the formalism of the Church of England burial service, its almost stoical lack of sympathy for those specially bereaved whose consolation should be its chief end. A service for all cases, with no discrimination save that of age and sex, is a service that suits no case. In preparing such services, the minister must realise the conditions vividly, think sympathetically, and while using the finest language of devotion available, take no prayer-book either to the house or to the grave. In these saddest places of life the Spirit of God will assuredly enable him from the heart to discharge a helpful and efficient ministry of consolation.

Before leaving this important subject of public and official prayer, it seems useful that I should refer by way of warning to several objectionable types of public devotion, most of which, though once common, are in these days happily disappearing. The expository prayer was once often heard. It is not yet dead, but happily dying. It was to all intents and purposes a commentary on, or exposition of, some selected passage or passages of Scripture with ejaculations which acted as connecting links between the paragraphs. Thus, "Lord help us to remember that the apostle did not mean this or that, but that

his teaching is so and so." The schoolmaster, the grammarian, or the sectarian is strongly in evidence throughout, but the humble man of prayer is absent. The opinions prayed about correspond evidently with the mind of God, and the Almighty is only introduced from time to time to substantiate them. A sermon is properly addressed to men and a prayer to God. An expository or preaching prayer is a monstrosity, the product of a little knowledge and much irreverence.

Akin to the expository is the controversial prayer. It takes two forms—the doctrinal and the ecclesiastical or sectarian. The leader of devotion argues before God on a disputed doctrinal theme or on a controverted ecclesiastical point, and having convinced himself that he is right, calls God to witness to the belief. Such travesties of prayer cannot be denounced too severely. Into the realm of true devotion such militant Boanergeses have surely never entered, for surely none but unprayerful disputants, victims of bigotry and passion, would ever dream of calling upon God in the holiest exercise of religion to back and approve their opinions. Indeed, were such people really conscious that prayer is addressed to God and has nothing to do with controversy, these disputative devotions had never existed. Happily, they are dying or dead.

We have next the eloquent, oratorical, or poetical prayer. There is no eloquence in prayer in the sense in which that word is used of language addressed

to our fellow creatures. God does not need to be convinced: He knows. Nothing therefore is so much out of place as eloquent or grandiloquent passages in prayers. God regards no graces of rhetoric but a humble penitent heart. Not long ago a minister conducted prayers at a funeral. He quoted twice from Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, and *Crossing the Bar*, once from *Hamlet*, once from Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and near the end a couplet from Burns. An example like this should warn ministers to leave all these and such as these beautiful and bewitching quotations at home when they go forth to conduct public devotions. They are good things in the wrong place. Prayer has no room for them.

Finally, the tone and the mode of prayer must be devotional. The deepest reverence must pervade the language and find expression in its tone. No whine, no drawl, and above all, no secularity. Dignified, reverential, yet withal manful and simple, let a minister's prayers be as becometh the address of the suppliant before the mercy-seat, dust and ashes in the presence of God. All familiarity of language or of tone is irreverence. I have heard more than one celebrated revivalist address the Almighty in public prayer as if he were telephoning his orders to the grocer he patronised. Others I have heard use the imperative rather than the supplicative mood. As one said, "Almighty God, Thou art our Father, and

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we demand immortality." Or as another eminent divine said in public prayer, not as he should have said, "O Lord, we confess our sins," but, "O Lord, we recognise and lament our blunders."

In a word, the sense of God deeply and fervently felt will dispel all such crudities, and as the minister feels that he is but the mouthpiece of the common prayer of a congregation of worshippers, he will be solemnised at once and uplifted in spirit to the discharge of the great function of religion—the laying with acceptance before God in language purified and sincere the devout homage and the spiritual offerings of many hearts.

And here it seems advisable to note in reference to the offering of public prayer, as also to the administration of the Sacraments, that the minister discharges and holds no priestly office. In the conduct of common prayer, the minister does not stand as priest between Almighty God and the souls of the worshippers. His function is not that of an intercessor for the people or of an offerer of their prayers by proxy. (It is his simply to lead and direct the common prayer, interpreting as best he can the aspirations and spiritual wants of the people, and expressing these with all due reverence, comprehensiveness, and earnest simplicity.) The prayers offered are the peoples' prayers directly offered up to God through him—and hence the better he knows and appreciates the circumstances

and spiritual needs of his people, the better will he present and reflect them. These conditions—the trials, sins, sorrows, temptations, and all that enters into and moulds the complex life of a congregation—a stranger can neither know nor express, and even the best minister can but in a general way help them in pouring out the desires of their hearts before God. (The preacher should therefore never fail to teach his people that the prayers of the congregation can never be a substitute for the private devotions, confessions, and supplications of the individual soul.)

Now it seems necessary in these days, when some ministers appear to be hankering after something equivalent to priestly claims and functions, to emphasise the fact that there is no priestly office in the Presbyterian Church, nor for that matter in the Church of Christ. Jesus instituted no priesthood, and in this regard His religion is unique. The Early Church, as represented in the teaching and practice of the Apostles, recognised no such office either directly or indirectly. St. Paul gives a catalogue of recognised offices—Ephesians iv. 11. And He (*i.e.*, Christ) “gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists and some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry.” No word of a priest—surely a significant omission. Then as to the functions discharged (1 Corinthians xii. 8).

“For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom—to another the word of knowledge, to another faith, to another the gifts of healing, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another divers kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues”—no word of the priestly function—significant omission.

One passage more—the choice passage of priestly claimants. St. Peter writes to the Jewish believers scattered over Asia Minor, and describes them in these terms—(1 Peter ii. 9), “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people”; (verse 5), “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” The apostle is striving to translate Judaistic ideas into Christian form. The style is that of Jewish idealism, rhetorically rendered, and represents no function of the Christian minister, endorses no priestly office. The priest of Christianity, foreign to the whole tenor of the teaching of Jesus and of His apostles, was clearly superinduced through the persistence of Judaism, and later on in accommodation to the forms of heathenism when the Church became in a narrow sense *Ecclesia*, and the “Kingdom of God” was forgotten. The Presbyterian Church then knows no priest. And I may add that within her there are no recognised sects or sections—

High, Broad, Low, or any other. I seriously advise young ministers to shun all sectional cliques and badges.

I have now to deal briefly with the administration of the Sacraments. The strictly theological aspects of these holy rites do not fall within my province, yet it is next to impossible to separate theory and practice for the simple reason that the former dominates the latter. From one point of view, the Sacraments overrule all else that Christianity contains, from another they are no more than illustrations of some of the truths which Christianity teaches. To the latter view, I unhesitatingly adhere.

We have two actions that express or illustrate two essential verities of the Christian faith. These are Baptism and the Lord's Supper, each a "sensible sign," each expressing a divine, unseen, and spiritual fact.

For the origin of Baptism as a religious rite we explore antiquity, and find it in many forms in paganism, illustrating, so far as we can judge, the deliverance of children and of men and women from some taint, deformity, or malign influence. Whether Jewish proselytes were baptised—that is dipped or sprinkled as an initiation to the commonwealth of Israel before the day of Christ, is still a moot question. Again, the relation of the baptism of John to Christian baptism, if there ever was any, is indeterminate. Jesus Himself baptised not. His

disciples did, and doubtless with His sanction, while in the addenda to the gospels we find the rite fully recognised and established as by His authority.

For the baptism of infants the sanction of the New Testament is merely inferential, and the form of the rite, sprinkling or dipping, is insignificant.

The Early Church, both Greek and Latin, baptised believers and their children, and the modern Church approves and follows that practice. All communions recognise it as the initiatory rite of the Christian religion, but all do not interpret its significance in the same way. This may be best illustrated by the liturgies of the Roman and Anglican Churches, and by the form in which it is administered in the Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

In the Roman Church the rite is administered by the priest partly at the church door. The godfather promises, in the child's name, to live and die in the true Catholic and Apostolic faith. In answer to the priest's question, "What dost thou demand of the Church?"—the godfather answers, "Eternal life." The priest recites the commandments, after which he breathes thrice in the child's face saying, "Come out of the child thou evil spirit, and make room for the Holy Ghost." The sign of the Cross is then made on the child's forehead and breast. Then some salt is blessed and put into the child's mouth, with the words, "Receive the salt of wisdom." Then the priest conducts the godfather and mother into the

Church and repeats the Apostle's Creed and the Lord's Prayer. At the font he again exorcises the evil spirit, and, taking a little of his own spittle, rubs it with the thumb of his right hand on the child's ears and nostrils, repeating the word, "Ephphatha." The child is then held over the font, crossed with holy oil, and thrice sprinkled with water in the name of the Trinity. The ceremonial ends with an exhortation.

The baptism of infants in the Anglican Church is regulated in all its details by the Prayer-Book. The godfathers and mothers as proxies for the child take the obligatory vows. Three fanciful illustrations are drawn from Scripture, none of which has any connection with infant or other baptism. The salvation of Noah, the baptism of Jesus by John in Jordan, and the bringing of children to Jesus by their mothers, not to be baptised but to be blessed. Baptismal regeneration is definitely expressed as the objective of the ordinance. "Grant Thy Holy Spirit to this infant, that he may be born again and be made an heir of everlasting salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord," is the baptismal prayer, as also, "We yield Thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased Thee to regenerate this infant by Thy Holy Spirit, and to receive him for Thine own child by adoption."

It does not fall within my province meanwhile to discuss the theological side of this interpretation.

Suffice it to point out that the Presbyterian Church has left her ministers a practically free hand, not committing them to any stringent dogma, but in practice ignoring the Roman and the Anglican interpretation, and regarding this sacrament simply as the initiatory rite of the Church symbolising the purifying influence of the Holy Ghost as necessary for the salvation of the human soul. The sacramental rite, it need hardly be said, has no more than an accidental connection with the naming of the child ; and the young minister need have no hesitation in assuring the mother who weeps over her dead, unbaptised child, that her dear and lost one is as absolutely safe as though it had been baptised, for the words of Jesus Himself spoken of unbaptised children remain as an abiding source of comfort and assurance, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven."

As Baptism is the initiatory so is the Lord's Supper the consummatory rite of the Christian Church. The first matter with which the minister is concerned is the preparation of young communicants. Here he is face to face not only with one of his most important duties but with the greatest opportunity of his ministry. The unfortunate gap that used to lie between the Sunday School and the membership of the Church is now happily being bridged by the continuation Bible Class. During

that interval, so long neglected, thousands of our young people were allowed to lapse by ministerial thoughtlessness and lack of organisation. It is for the young of both sexes the most precarious, as it may be made the most fruitful and decisive period of their lives. There is a tide in all human affairs, and in the religious life especially, which, taken at the flood, leads on to highest things, but, if omitted, leads to irreparable disaster. At fifteen or sixteen that tide in the spiritual experience of the soul is at its flood. As he that winneth souls is wise, so must the psychological crisis be seized and utilised. It is the most precious opportunity. It may never occur again. Oh the joy of seizing, the shame of neglecting and letting it pass!

The young soul on which the eternal is just dawning with all its hope and joy and boundless possibility is the good minister's seed-field, precious beyond all computation. The soil is receptive then, and the seeds of good or of evil germinate rapidly. It is God's springtime of the soul. The young communicants' class is the most impressionable and responsive of all the classes a minister can ever address. The young communicant is ready as he has never been before, and may never be again, to give himself to Christ. He makes vows and resolutions before God. Let the minister be in spirit with him wisely prompting, gently guiding, lest he miss the winning of a soul.

Manuals of preparation for communion are numerous, and many of them good; but there seems no reason why each minister should not be able to prepare a programme of subjects for himself quite equal to the best of these and better for his use than any of them, because embodying his own highest thought and ideals. The young communicant, moreover, will take to his own minister's manual more kindly than to a stranger's. Six weeks are usually devoted to these preparatory studies, and that should be the minimum. Then on the occasion of the congregational preparatory service the young communicants are introduced to the elders, and publicly admitted to the membership of the Church. They are solemnly exhorted, stirred to enthusiasm for the Christ whose dying love they are to commemorate, and impressions then and thus made are in many a case admittedly the most solemn and permanent in a life's experience.

The ordinance itself is of the simplest, and ministers should be most jealous in their maintenance of that simplicity. All are aware how it has been overlaid with accretions, till in the celebration of the Mass, the simple gospel rite is barely recognisable. The simple symbolism of Jesus Christ is hopelessly lost amid gorgeous vestments and spectacular displays. There is a slight tendency in certain quarters to hark back to the

mediaeval travesty of the institution, and against this tendency it is my duty to warn young ministers. It is a retrograde movement associated with priestly assumption, without scriptural warrant, and dangerously suggestive of the superstition from which the Reformation delivered us. It is the deforming and degrading of Christ's own ordinance, and we may not forget that there is a spurious piety which does impious things, and a morbid religiosity which kills religion.

The divine simplicity of the rite must be kept sacred and inviolable. It needs no tinsel, no mediaeval colourings, no tawdry frame. There is no altar in the Presbyterian Church, no priest, no sacrifice. The institution of our Lord Himself and His example are devoutly followed. The celebration has a simple dignity and spiritual significance that allow space for no elaboration. The bread and wine are ordinary bread and wine. Unfermented wine, as they call some concoction of the druggist that a few faddists prefer, had no existence in the first century. What Jesus blessed was wine. What was good enough for Him ought surely to be good enough for us: and if any man says that the alcohol in the sip of wine he takes to commemorate the shed blood of his Redeemer is dangerous to his soul, such a brother on his own confession can hardly be certified as prepared for the ordinance. The minister following

the example of our Lord consecrates the elements, breaks the bread symbolical of the broken body, pours out or distributes the wine, emblem of the outpoured blood—using the formula, “Take, eat, this is My body, this do in remembrance of Me.” Also, “This cup is the New Testament in My blood, drink ye all of it.” The elders first, then the congregation, partake. When no sermon has been preached the minister should make two very short addresses, one in introducing the ordinance, the other after communion. On the occasion of the celebration of the communion, the services should all be subordinated to and in spiritual harmony with the commemoration of the death and dying love of our blessed Lord. The minister must be in the spirit on that day. All controversy must be excluded, and the emotional side of Christianity should be emphasised. Christ is to be set forth openly crucified among us, and the hidden springs of emotion that connect us with the most sacred verities of our faith must be touched. Faith strengthened, love inflamed, hope exalted, and the whole ideal of life uplifted into the presence of the crucified. These are the ends of the Lord’s Supper; the celebration is but the means.

CHAPTER VII

Ministry to the Young—Social Work— Pastoral Visitation

THE latent strength of the Church lies in its young people. Their presence makes it what it is, and their adherence and accession constitute the sure and only guarantee of its stability, even of its continuance. A childless household is a dismal one ; a childless Church has a poor present and no future.

Nothing need be added to these self-evident truths to emphasise and bring into the forefront the importance, nay, the absolute necessity of the Church taking care of the young. There were periods in the history of the Presbyterian Church when this obvious fact received hardly any consideration and no practical recognition. From the date of his baptism to that of his admission into the membership of the Church—that is, for the twenty or five-and-twenty years most precious and most critical in the moral and spiritual making of the man, the Church looked callously on, taking

no interest in those determining things for weal or woe that should have been her constant and peculiar care. Such periods were non-productive and non-progressive. The Church, having a name to live, took as her inheritance an unearned reputation. Vital religion was a phrase hardly corresponding to any reality, and sure enough the first visible sign that the quickening breath of God had returned was the Churches' sudden recognition of a long forgotten duty—the care of the children.

The Roman and Anglican Churches had not lapsed into indifference regarding the young, while the Presbyterian Church had—the reason being probably the assumed sufficiency for religious teaching of the parish schools with their daily Bible and Catechism lessons. Such “use and wont” teaching still obtains in our public elementary schools; and so far as its instructive value goes, is probably as good and sufficient to-day as it was fifty or more years ago. But it is not mere instruction in the facts of the Bible, nor the memorising of doctrinal formulæ such as the Catechism presents, that meets the situation. These results are attained by drill and task work with, when necessary, the ordinary compulsion in a purely secular atmosphere. Bible history and geography are taught, and the catechetical formulæ are drummed into the young memory just as the

history and geography of Scotland and the Multiplication Table are. The result may be called "religious knowledge," an undoubtedly useful and highly commendable attainment, but the child needs more, and it is the Churches' function and business to see and to make sure that he gets what he needs—nutriment for the soul, religious education, training, influence. These results can hardly be expected in an atmosphere of task-work, saturated with reading, writing, and arithmetic. And here the true meaning and intention of the Sunday School comes into view. Its *raison d'être* is to supply a religious want, to supplement with religious feeling and influence what of religious knowledge the day-school provides.

Hence the primary and altogether indispensable necessity for a Sunday School. It is there to provide for the children a religious atmosphere, a sphere or area of special religious influence and spiritual impression. Away from the ordinary task-work world with its secular compulsion and competition, the children of the Church are led by the pastor's gentle hand into a hallowed sphere of Christian influence where religion dwells. There Bible history and geography acquire a new meaning through association with the sacred verities. God's spirit is there, and the living, loving Saviour takes as of old the lambs in His arms to bless them and show them the ways of His Kingdom.

Now it need hardly be said that if this atmosphere be not secured the Sunday school is a failure. If it be but a little bit of the day-school pitch-forked into Sunday it may as well not be. If it does not accomplish something that the day-school cannot, you had better give it up. A weekly hour on the same lines as the day-school lessons is of no appreciable value. It is the spirit of the work that makes the whole difference, and is the only apology for Sunday school effort. The minister starts with that, and with that he finishes. But ere I enter on detail you will permit me to observe, that just as the successful manager of any great concern must be able and ready at a moment's notice to take any post, the lowest if it be vacant, so must the manager of a Sunday school be able and willing to take the place of superintendent or to teach the infant class, the latter office being probably more difficult than the former.

To this end he must bring two qualifications. *First*, he must be a lover of children ; and *secondly*, he must know by practice the science and art of teaching. As to the first, it is happily natural to most men, but in every man there is scope for its higher development. The teacher's love will speedily beget a corresponding affection in the child-mind. Deepening the teacher's interest, it will suggest ways and means innumerable of closer correspondence. It will lead him down from official and educational

heights to the low valleys where child-thought wanders, and the little feet can be guided in the ways of sweet simplicity over the green pastures by the margin of the water of life.

Such love will make his teaching intelligible, his lessons inspiring, fascinating, fruitful. It will guide him to the child's Bible that lies hid within the other one, and show him where to find and how to teach doctrine that will win its way for Christ into that wondrous world of child life. It will tell him by spiritual instinct that the Shorter Catechism is not a book of any interest or of any value to a child, and that it is as foolish to try to put an old, Calvinistic head upon young shoulders as to intrude metaphysical technicalities into the unsophisticated mind of a child. Love will teach the teacher not to offend against one of these little ones, but to give them the sincere milk fitted for babes that they may grow thereby. Love will contrive their summer picnics, guide their sports, encourage their singing and their dancing, open their hearts and hands to the mission-boxes for the poor and the sick at home and the youngsters in the far-off lands of heathenism, and, above all, bring religion out from the catacombs of the dead to sweeten and to gladden the hearts of the living and the loved. This is Sunday school work, and nothing but love can do it.

Now for organisation. I have said that the Sunday school is not primarily a school of Bible facts,

texts, and doctrines, but a school of religion. It does not follow that its end can be attained without organisation. A chaotic Sunday school can never be a useful one, for order and attainment are inseparable. Teaching to be of any value must be methodical, scientific. The teacher must be taught to teach, and here I venture to throw out a suggestion that may yet be of service. There are certain Arts classes in the University that students in divinity are accustomed to take out as addenda to the course prescribed for graduation. Might I venture to commend among these available excursions the class of Education—the science and art of teaching as among the very best equipment for a minister. The knowledge there offered will be found of incalculable value in future ministerial work. It will make the minister feel at home in all matters educational with which he has to deal either in the organisation of Sunday school, the work of Bible classes, or as a member of a School Board.

Failing this special and direct educational training, let me commend to students the exceeding desirableness of attaching themselves to one of the city churches as Sunday school teachers, leaders of Bible classes, or of young men's guilds, or all three if they will. Such work will in the end be far more fruitful and advantageous to a young minister than Sunday preaching expeditions as pulpit supply.

Now if the Sunday school be that of a country parish the minister will of necessity be superintendent,

and he will have to teach his teachers the area of selection being limited. He will of course be more tactful than to put it in that blunt way, but all the same he will arrange to meet his staff of teachers for half an hour or more every week to consult with them or, more plainly, to go over with them in detail the lessons of the following Sunday. Such rehearsals will have a wonderful influence in maintaining the enthusiasm of the staff, and in making the whole teaching of the school and the spirit of it homogeneous. For infant children especially, the lessons should be bright. The eye and the ear—pictures and melodies wedded to divine ideas go further than critical expositions or long-winded exhortations. The teaching must be suited to the taught, and let it never be forgotten that in nourishing and cherishing the Sunday school the minister is conserving and accumulating the most precious asset that the Church possesses. He is building the Church of the future. In the children, and in them alone, the Church has that sure and perennial source of supply on which and by which its permanence is assured. Take care of the children, despise not, neglect not one of these little ones, and the harvest will be garnered long after the minister who has done the work of the sower has himself been gathered in. Good

The gap between the Sunday school and the membership of the church, as I have already indicated, is the crux of the situation, and is only now reverted

to for its commanding importance. Not for the Church alone but for the well-being of the community this gap must be effectually filled up. Out of it unbridged emerge, later on, the wastrels of society, the casuals, the loafers, the unemployed, and later on still, the unemployable.

The process of drift begins simply enough. The parents probably are keen to secure at once the highest earnings their children can bring in, in order to supplement the scanty household exchequer. Casual employment offers the best wage, and "sufficient unto the day" is the motto of present need and short-sighted greed. The boy or girl goes off to an occupation that has no future. Apprenticed to nothing, and picking up meanwhile more than an apprentice fee, the boy drifts on past the age of apprenticeship, and early graduates an unskilled casual labourer. He has long lost hold of the Church and the Church of him; and with no outlook in life but a hand-to-mouth existence, he takes his place among the flotsam and jetsam of human society.

In the case of girls, the difficulty is modified alike in character and in intensity. The artisan's little daughters, with a smattering of Board-school French and a few bars of pianoforte music in their heads, look scornfully at domestic service and wish to be clerkesses, milliners, and shop-counter assistants, so that they may have their evenings to go their own

ways. Not to speak of the shoals and quicksands that beset them there, there is the certainty of a bad preparation or none for the duties of domestic life, where their natural vocation lies.

Now with these social conditions, the minister as pastor is called to deal, and his treatment must be tactful, judicious, persuasive. First of all, he has to deal with parents. He must arrange to meet them in friendly, fatherly conference. His interest in their boys and girls must be his one claim, and apology for venturing to intervene as an adviser and guide. He will then point out the lifelong advantage to their boy of teaching him a trade, and the duty that lies on them of giving him a chance to become a useful member of society, even if that duty has to be done at a little present self-denial—the difference between an apprentice's nominal wage, and the short-lived though higher remuneration of casual employment. The way so far paved, the minister must next get at the boy himself, and in a kind, yet firm and fatherly way, let him see the two futures, and point him to successful men who have risen from the ranks. Having fired the young and receptive mind with ambition's dream, he will next discover what kind of a trade or occupation of skill the boy likes best, and if he has no definite views, point out a few for his consideration and selection. When a little later on he has learned the boy's bent, his duty is not ended. Now is the

psychologic moment, and he must catch its possibilities, start to find an apprentice-master, nail down the compact, parents agreeing, and a big bit of work is done for the making of a man. The pastor may put it otherwise—the salvation of a soul is substantially in it.

Now for the girls. Here the mother is *persona prima*, and her daughter's safety and permanent welfare may be assumed as assets for the minister's use. As before he will suggest for her consideration the two futures. The mother, an artisan's wife, who has probably been herself a household servant, may have modern ideas of making her daughter, as she puts it, better than she had been—a mantua-maker, clerkess, or something more genteel than a house or laundry-maid. The minister must play out his trumps. The red card of danger is his dominant, and his greater knowledge of things as they are will have its influence. Good domestic service, well-paid, easily procured, happy, honourable, and all in the lines of her future life, will make a good show in a loving mother's eyes. With the girl herself, there may be more of a struggle. The ugly word "slavery," recently attached to domestic service, goes a long way to prejudice a young woman who stands on the brink of her life's endeavour, against consenting to join the ranks of what to her is really, though she does not know it, the safest and best cared for occupation. I do not expect a minister to be

an employment agent; but in such a case as this he could not do better than find a good mistress for the girl.

Of these details more elaboration has been made than some may suppose necessary. As a matter of fact, though apparently insignificant, they lie at the root of the whole question of unemployment, lapsed masses, social work, and all the rest of it. It is always an easier task to keep things from going wrong than to set them right when they are wrong. Prevention is not only better, but it is vastly easier than cure. Much of our social work is little else than locking the door after the steed is stolen, and to deal effectually with those who left the right road long ago, and have been habituated for years to the wrong one, is surely the hardest task a minister of religion can undertake, while it is the despair of the social reformer. Be strenuous in keeping your boys and girls right, and your future men and women will not go far wrong.

Having started them at fourteen or sixteen on the way to a virtuous and successful life, the minister should keep them under his observation all the time. Enrol them one and all, if possible, in the junior Bible class, and set them to interesting and intelligent work on the grand old Book of God. Familiarise them with the biographies of patriarchs and prophets of the Old, and with the historic lines of the New Testament. One of the synoptic Gospels

and the Acts of the Apostles, illustrated by the geography and social conditions of the places in Bible times, will form a solid and substantial foundation for the fabric of Christian doctrine to be subsequently reared upon. The junior class should have plenty of memory work. In the hidden recesses and secret chambers of the mind, let the brightest and best passages of the prophets and evangelists be stored. That is the spiritual savings bank. A life's treasure lies there; for what the memory holds in store at eighteen becomes a permanent part of the man. Young people ought not to be asked to find out isolated texts anywhere and everywhere to prove a doctrine. The process should be reversed. The text should be read in the spirit, with reverence and intelligence. The living Word of God, grafted in the memory and rooted in the heart, will in the meantime provide all the doctrine that is needed, not in abstract propositions but, better far, in the concrete realities of life and character outspringing from a simple loving faith, and promising a reproduction of the mind of Christ.

With the senior Bible class, the minister should take a wider range. He should show how the probable dates of the books of the Bible, and the historical environment of the inspired contributions from age to age, cast a fascinating and revealing light on the whole significance and content of Scripture. He should show how amid the infinite

diversity of spiritual attainment that conditioned the authors and illustrate the meaning of their messages, there is a wondrous unity of purpose, and a growing light shining more and more unto the day of the revelation of Christ. All roads lead to Rome, and all the tracks and highways of these ancient Scriptures lead forward to the city of the Lord, and the glory of His Christ. Now the Divine Master's teaching, its method, its import, its illustration in His own life and death, and the afterglow of the Apostolic age, are with the minister and his class. Here doctrine should be taught. No young man or woman's mind at this stage should be troubled with speculative doubts. Demonstrations of the truth of Christianity and the proofs of the existence of God, addressed to those who never doubted, too often produce results exactly opposite to those the pious propagandists intended. Let the minister lead ingenuous youth where the only dogmatic is the faith of Christ, and let his own life and conduct make it perfectly evident to his pupils that he knows Whom he has believed.

There is left to be dealt with the darker and more difficult side of this question—the side of non-success. Some young people, despite their minister's efforts, will take the wrong way, and ere long find themselves among the submerged. Then you have the unhappy and growing mass of unemployed, with the still more hopeless fringe of unemployable, the

deserving and the undeserving poor, with the Tophet of drunkenness, immorality, debauchery, and crime yawning in the slums. The Church and the ministry may not, dare not, ignore these unsavoury but, alas, too palpable realities. No excuse can be made that the sinking and the sunken are beyond their pale—or beyond all hope. The ministry may neither ignore nor despair of any human soul, however degraded and diseased. One came to seek and to save that which was lost, and there is no work for a follower of His that is at once more imperative and more Christ-like. I make no comparison as to the relative difficulty between the Foreign and Home Mission work among the black and among the white heathen respectively, but this I do say, that with poverty, sin, and misery clamant at our door, the Church that turns a deaf ear to the cry has abnegated its functions. Jesus called not the righteous but sinners to repentance. The poor had ever the first and foremost place in His divine regard and human sympathy. And if the Gospel has in any sense ceased to be the gospel to the sinful and the poor, in that same sense and degree has it ceased to be the gospel of Christ.

Now these great problems of poverty, vice, and crime, with the many subsidiary problems that either accompany or flow from them, are in the open view of the nation and of the Church. Each of these organisations, the one secular, the other sacred, has

its separate duty to discharge, and its separate powers to exert in making for their solution.

With regard to Poverty, the nation, leaving intact the old parochial or parish-council machinery for local poor relief, has recently, whether wisely or not, made a mechanical effort or experiment by offering on an indiscriminate and non-contributory basis doles to the poor in the form of old-age pensions.

But this is only a superficial dealing with the problem. The want of work is easily assigned as the most productive source of poverty. Whence this want of work? Politicians wrangle hopelessly over the answer. Political economists differ fundamentally. Statesmen speculate, ponder, and differ as to whether some readjustment of economic conditions will set the wheels of commerce rolling. The secular Socialist clamours for command of capital, the nationalisation of land, railways, factories, and anticipates a new heaven and a new earth, when everything will belong to everybody and nothing to anybody.

Now with regard to the economic sources of unemployment and poverty, the Church and its ministers are not called on officially to intervene. These matters are speculative, and belong so much to the realm of experimental statesmanship that they had best be left there. It would not advance a minister's true work as a spiritual guide and moral instructor to be a political partisan. But a minister

within his own circle may express his mind quite frankly, giving a reason for the political faith that is in him.

The modern Church, however, can hardly in these days afford to stand aloof and express no opinion at all for the guidance of the people, regarding the great movement or set of movements passing under the common designation of Socialism. There must be a determination of the question whether these are for us or against. The very core of Christianity may be affected adversely or otherwise. The minister must know where he is in relation to them. In approaching this inquiry in a deliberate and philosophical spirit he is met by three sets of things, each claiming the name "Socialism," but manifesting such contrariety that he must get at the right connotation ere he is in a position to take sides.

(1.) He is acquainted with Christian brotherhood, properly enough called Socialism. The Christian Church is a society constituted for the common weal. In early days it made more than one attempt to collect a common stock and live upon it. The idea was Christian. "We are members one of another," but the method of working it out by all having equal rations at the common table was found to be impracticable and was early abandoned. The principle, however, remained basal in the religion of Christ. "How can I best and most serve my brother,"

is still the Christian quest. Voluntary self-sacrifice for my brother's weal and Christ's sake is the Christian man's motto. It is the motto of Christian Socialism.

(2.) The minister is also acquainted with modern philosophies of human life, theories of economics, fair division of goods, non-competitive equality, and the social millennium, when everybody shall possess everything, and nobody anything. Such theories are attractive, and eminently productive of high-sounding phrases. In the minds of many capable philosophers of Sociology this speculative Socialism becomes a panacea for the ills of humanity, and something like a new religion. The modern minister is interested in this recrudescence of Utopia, and may even be caught by the glamour of it. But it is in the air, where it does not compete with Christianity or anything else, and so the speculative Socialist may be safely left to his dream.

(3.) The Socialism of the present day which the minister and the Church have to meet has nothing ethereal about it. Its foundations are earthly, and all the philosophy it knows is how to apply the brute force of majorities to compass its selfish ends and sordid purposes. Between this secular Socialism, with its greed and godlessness, and the Church of Christ there can never be agreement. Not on worldliness can anything noble in humanity be upreared. "Speak to my brother that he divide

the inheritance with me," said a malcontent to the Master, in the tones of injured innocence. "Man," was the divinely simple but far-reaching reply, "who made me a judge or a divider over you? Take heed and beware of covetousness, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

The other roots and sources of poverty lie to some extent within the jurisdiction of the State, but the Church and its ministers hold by much the larger share alike of responsibility and influence. Thriftlessness, laziness, gambling, dishonesty, intemperance, lust and crime, are a few of these malignant roots whence most of our social evils and miseries spring. Now to reach these and eradicate them demands powers and an influence which the State cannot exert. The State interposes when and where it can, and follows up certain breaches of its law, with mechanical punishment. It also aims at the reclamation of the offender, using such agents as the magistrate and the prison chaplain, but there it reaches the limit of its possibilities. The bolting of doors does not make the thief an honest man, nor the drunkard a temperate man, and though "oft the sight of means to do ill deeds makes ill deeds done," the mechanical removal of these temptations no more effects the moral change in the would-be offender than does penal servitude transform the criminal into a law-abiding citizen.

“Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication, false witness, and blasphemy.” The State has no instrument wherewith to reach the heart. Hence the need of a divine instrument—the transforming and redeeming power of religion. The most abandoned villain has still in his soul an uncontaminated spot where his better being resides, and where the redeeming grace of God can find a lodgement. No punitive vengeance can reach that spot; but the love of Christ can win its wondrous way there and wield its conquering power. There is here an open field amid vice and crime for the true minister of Christ—a field closed to all others.

Needless to deal in detail with the methods of applying the remedy. They must vary with the forms of the malady, and with the varying dispositions of individuals. Skill, tact, sympathy, and Christ-like love are all needed if, like his Master, the minister is to seek and to save.

Thriftlessness is to be remedied, not by blunt rebuke so often ineffective, but by pointing out a high and good reason for economy—power to help others, sense of duty, and the like. But mere counselling is not enough. The minister should show the way by starting a savings bank for Sunday scholars, Bible classes, guilds, and the like.

Gambling again is a mania. Boys and young men should be warned against it. They should be inspired with an abhorrence of ill-gotten gains.

Intemperance, that most fruitful source of social evil, of poverty, vice and crime, is not to be cured by mere repressive legislation, but its evil fruits may be lessened by wise regulations along the lines of the best public opinion, never beyond these lines. All measures that either lag behind or anticipate the enlightened public opinion of the time are foredoomed to failure. It is the part of the Church and its ministers to educate and develop along the best lines that public opinion, and in doing so the minister has a task of the utmost delicacy. If an extremist, he will offend and not educate. If he attempt, as has sometimes been done, to identify Christianity with total abstinence from alcoholic liquors, he will find no warrant for such a position either in the teaching and example of Jesus Christ, or in the principles and practice of Christianity, as these are expressed or illustrated in the New Testament. Personally, the minister is perfectly free to adopt total abstinence or moderation, the latter position, and not the former, demanding the higher exercise of self-control. Whatever his views may be, he has no warrant to press them violently upon those who differ. He must treat all with Christian courtesy, and make sure that his own well-regulated life is an example to all over whom the Lord has set him as an overseer. Nor must it be forgotten that as he lives for his people and not for himself, he will adopt that policy and practice in this matter,

which will most enhance his influence for good and strengthen his position as an ambassador of Christ.

Temperance teaching may begin with a Band of Hope and be continued in Bible classes and Guilds ; but I have found that the most effectual means of keeping young and older men away from the public-house is to provide for their evenings places for wholesome recreation and mental improvement, where books, newspapers, magazines, draughts, chess, and such things are ready to hand, and where, in well-lighted and comfortably heated rooms, an atmosphere of genial sociality can be secured. Such an institute will do more for the temperance cause than all the spasmodic efforts of imported extremists could possibly effect.

I have dealt thus far with a few of the causes and sources of poverty, but have still to impress the fact that whatever the sources and conditions be out of which poverty springs, and whatever efforts be put forth by legislation to counteract and diminish them, the care of the poor is a first charge upon the Church and the ministry. They are God's poor ; and their presence in a community should constitute not a mere calamity to be deplored, but an opportunity and a help for the exercise of practical Christianity. Recently, the Church of Scotland has instituted as a new and experimental departure—Labour homes and colonies for the unemployed and

destitute. They are in their measure fulfilling expectation ; but the measure is small, the need great and growing. It is a pioneer endeavour preparing the way for better things—an attempt to help the poor without pauperising them. Only on a national scale can the situation be effectually tackled, but meanwhile the Church is opening her eyes to the necessity, and trying to show the way, or one way, to meet it on Christian lines.

It is the minister's duty then to count the poor part of his heritage, a sacred trust committed to him to hold and to use for Christ's sake. In all tenderness and courtesy, therefore, he should help, encourage, sympathise with them, and by respecting them, encourage them to retain their own self-respect, the loss of which is poverty's last and worst calamity. Moreover, if and when a minister finds conditions that tend to demoralise and impoverish, slum dwellings, squalid public-houses, unclean areas, it is his duty to arouse public interest, quicken public sympathy, focus public opinion, and with such helps and forces at his back, to carry forward a steady and determined crusade against them. The strongholds of selfishness must be assailed, the gutters of vice, depravity, and disease swept clean in the name of humanity and the Christ who saves. Thrift, honesty, cleanliness, temperance, brotherhood are the beginnings of, and the altogether indispensable preparation for that Gospel of the grace of God which is committed

to us wherewith to purify the external conditions of life and uplift the soul into the peace of God.

I wish now to say a few words about the missions of the Church "schemes," as they were unwisely christened. I think the minister should specially interest himself in those that appeal to him most strongly. The Home Mission is the first in order of importance. "Beginning at Jerusalem," was the Master's marching order to His Apostles. Then the needs of the heathen, of one's own countrymen in new colonies, and of people in places where the maintenance of religion and its ordinances is difficult. Then attention should be given to the more adequate maintenance of the ministry, and the making of suitable provision for those pastors who, by age or infirmity, are laid aside from active service. In direct proportion as the minister is able to educate his people and evoke their enthusiasm and their contributions towards these Christian objects, in that same degree will the people be loyal to his congregation and benefit by his ministry. The greater the sacrifices for religion, the deeper into a man's soul sinks its influence and power. A minister should never be backward in pressing the claims of missions on his people, for by calling out their gifts for Christ's sake, he is strengthening their faith, deepening their devotion, and enriching their souls. It may be quite true that the spiritual progress of a congregation is not to be measured by the weight of

the collection bags, but where, among people able to give, there is a grudging and niggardly offering for the carrying on of Christ's work at home and abroad, the minister has great cause to suspect that the harvest of his ministry is meagre.

"Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my life, my soul, my all,"

sang the people heartily at morning service. "Should you not be surprised and even ashamed," said the minister, "that after admitting such a responsibility, the offering this morning for the cancelling of such a debt amounted to nineteen and sevenpence, something less than a halfpenny each."

"To see my congregation," said an old minister whom I knew, "one would suppose they were ladies and gentlemen fairly well-to-do. To see the collection they made to-day, nobody could come to any other conclusion than that they were nearly all brothers and sisters of the poor widow, whose fortune was two mites."

In the course of the foregoing chapters, I have been discussing in the full light of the ministerial requirements of to-day the conditions and attainments upon which depend a minister's efficiency and ultimate success. Two points remain upon which something must be said.

(1) The minister must be *persona grata* in the homes of his people. They wish to have it so,

and pastoral duty requires it. No preaching, however eloquent, or church services, however attractive, will atone for the neglect of household visitation. It was said long ago that "a house-going minister makes a church-going people." The saying is true as ever ; for while a shoe-leather ministry is no substitute for an efficient pulpit ministry, it goes a long way in public estimation to atone for many pulpit defects. The minister known and loved at the firesides of his people will have a full church though his pulpit work be oft-times far from brilliant.

The informal pastoral visit has assuredly its place and use, but the truly ministerial visit is indispensable. How often, after a long and exhausting day of pastoral visitation of the former kind, does the minister return to his manse with the uneasy sense of having laboured in vain. But he must not forget that real spiritual work is not all summed up in prayers and religious conversation. The kind word and the kindly interest—how often do these count for more than the most brilliant sermon? Of all branches of ministerial visitation, however, that to the aged, the infirm, and the sick is the most important. Whatever else in a minister's work may at exceptional times be allowed to fall into arrear, it must never be this kind of pastoral visitation. Nor can such delicate work be discharged in a casual or slovenly way. The pastor at the sick bed must have his whole soul with him, for here he discharges

his supreme function. Never is he closer to his Master's mind and work. Are the patient's feet treading the valley of the shadow? Let the pastor be there in spirit with him bearing the Christ-light, and, with tender solicitude and perfect confidence, helping him to lean on the great Shepherd. When all is over, the bereaved need the word of cheer and consolation. There is no higher work on earth than this. It needs the best man at his best.

(2) Good health is a *sine qua non* of ministerial success. A pastor who is an invalid or a semi-invalid is seriously handicapped. *Mens sana in sano corpore* is the rule of life. Neglect of the body entails consequences that debilitate the mind and make the highest success impossible. The pale curate, anæmic and flabby, may be the heart's desire of morbid religionists—the dying man ministering to dying men—but he can never face the tear and wear of the work required of an efficient minister. The minister must maintain the physical fabric by regular habits and rational methods. He must not sit pouring over a sermon till two o'clock on Sunday morning if he expect to do either himself or his congregation justice. Let God's fresh air invigorate and inspire him. The minister that does no gardening, and never sees a golf course or a curling pond, is the man who will be shortly applying to his Presbytery for a six months' leave of absence on the score of ill-health. Let a minister take time by the

forelock and his rest and recreation in the midst of his work, and he may never need a medical certificate.

My final word will be an earnest appeal for the highest ideal of the ministry being kept steadily in view. The minister should, with unwavering determination, work steadily towards it. There is no calling on earth so noble as his—the service of his fellow men for Christ's sake. It needs all his gifts, all his acquirements, academic and practical, all his zeal, his common sense, his self-sacrifice, his passion for righteousness, his whole-hearted loyalty to Christ.

"In Christ's stead." Let that be the ministerial motto. Let every minister represent Christ in his own way, but ever strive to represent Him, and his ministry will be abundantly blessed.

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